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GOOD AI

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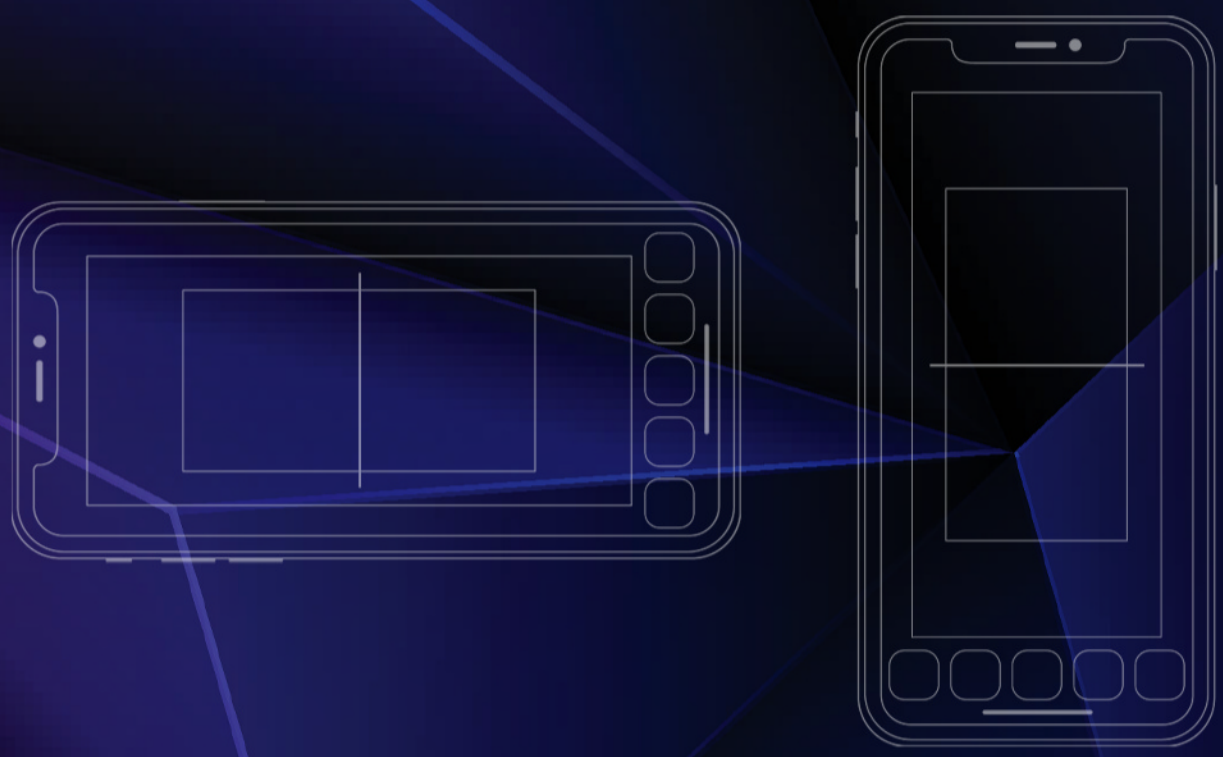

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AIR FORCE AWARDS A START-UP COMPANY $235 MILLION TO BUILD AN EXAMPLE OF A SLEEK NEW PLANE

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The U.S. Air Force will invest $235 million to help a start-up manufacturer build a jet with a blended-wing body that officials say could provide greater range and efficiency for military tankers and cargo planes and perhaps eventually be used to carry airline passengers.

JetZero and the Air Force, which announced the award this week, say they hope that the full-size demonstrator plane will be ready to fly in 2027.

Most large airplanes are tubes with wings and a tail section attached. Blended-wing planes are designed with the body and wings being one piece. The result is a sleek, futuristic-looking aircraft with less aerodynamic drag than a conventional plane of the same size.

JetZero officials argue that traditional planes are running out of ways to improve fuel efficiency, and, with fuel prices likely to rise, an entirely new design is needed to reduce fuel consumption and emissions.

The Air Force, the Pentagon's Defense Innovation Unit and NASA are working on the project. JetZero has a partner in defense contractor Northrop Grumman.

The idea of a blended-wing body is not new. Boeing built and tested reduced-scale samples of its X-48. Lockheed Martin has tested a Hybrid Wing Body design in wind tunnels. The Air Force said technology advancements in materials and manufacturing have made the production of larger-scale demonstrators possible.

At a briefing Wednesday, officials said the JetZero demonstrator could determine whether a blended-wing body could be

HE PENTAGON
WASHINGTON

used in future refueling tankers and cargo planes for the Air Force. They said passenger and cargo airlines could also benefit if the design adds seating or cargo space and reduces fuel costs.

"The commercial industry is thirsty for solutions that aren't so thirsty for fuel," said Tom O'Leary, the CEO and co-founder of JetZero, which is based in Los Angeles.

O'Leary acknowledged that the Air Force award will not be enough to cover the development and production of even a single full-scale prototype, but he gave few details on the company's funding.

"While our total funding is not public, we will be having private investment and partners contributing to that," he said.

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ORLANDO, FLORIDA, DEBUTS SELF-DRIVING SHUTTLE THAT WILL WHISK PASSENGERS AROUND DOWNTOWN

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There is going to be a new way to get around downtown Orlando, Florida, and it's not going to require any human drivers.

Starting later this month, an electric, self-driving shuttle will whisk passengers around a 1-mile (1.6 km) loop in the downtown area for no charge, Orlando officials said this week.

The eight-passenger shuttle service is part of a six-month trial for the central Florida city. Transportation planners hope to use data gathered from the pilot program to guide the city's future transportation strategy.

"With the expansion of autonomous vehicle shuttles into our neighborhoods, we can converge cutting-edge technology with new mobility solutions to further redefine the way our community moves," Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer said.

The autonomous shuttle service is operated by Beep Inc., an Orlando-based company that already operates a similar service in a planned community near Orlando International Airport.

Beep's experience extends beyond Florida with other deployments throughout the country including the first autonomous shuttles at Yellowstone National Park in June 2021.

"What's amazing is that we are monitoring the safe operation of those shuttles from Lake Nona at our headquarters in the Town Center," says Joe Moye, Beep CEO. "We're looking to provide an autonomous reality for people who are looking to replicate the Lake Nona experience, which is innovative, safe and sustainable transportation."

The sustainability aspect is what Beep has found to be key in conveying a sense of purpose and

CAUTION
beep

ownership to their passengers. Since launch, Beep has eliminated the equivalent of more than 16,500 vehicle trips from roads, which amounts to a significant carbon footprint impact. "When our passengers learn about their direct impact on helping the environment, they feel an additional sense of purpose to the program, which is what has helped us grow so quickly and develop additional partnerships that have contributed to our success," says Joe Moye, Beep CEO.

There's more growth on the horizon for the program, with plans to grow the fleet with new smart infrastructure to support the future network.

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INVESTMENT SCAMS ARE EVERYWHERE ON SOCIAL MEDIA. HERE'S HOW TO SPOT ONE

Social media is full of scammers promising guaranteed returns on investment, and consumers lost billions of dollars to them last year.

Troy Gochenour, 50, of Columbus, Ohio, was conned out of $25,800, including $15,800 in borrowed money, in a crypto-mining scam that began with a WhatsApp message from a beautiful stranger.

"I had just moved home to restart my life, after trying to make it in show business in New York, and I was lonely," Gochenour said. "So I started

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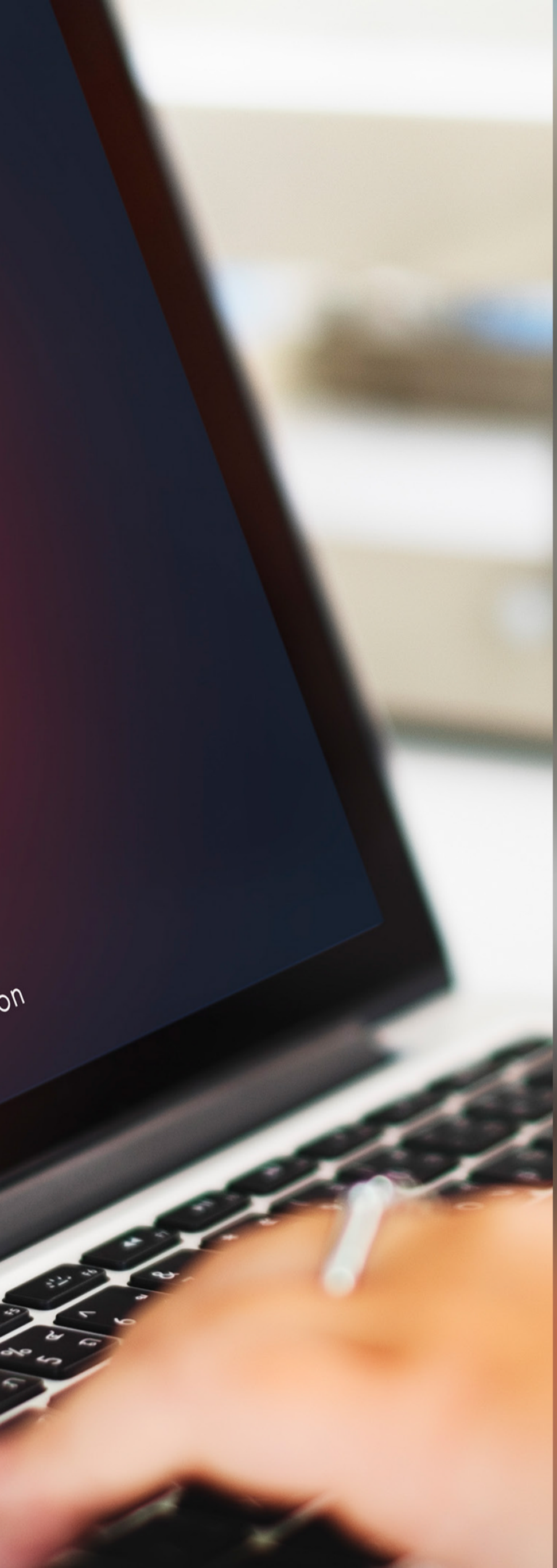

online dating. Then I got a WhatsApp message that began, 'Sorry to bother you.'"

Financial scams, including cryptocurrency schemes, cost consumers $3.8 billion last year just in the U.S., according to the Federal Trade Commission, twice as much as in 2021. Such scams are also a problem globally.

Those who work in the space, including the FTC and Better Business Bureau, say the speed and convenience of the internet, the rise of online payment platforms and apps, and the spread of financial misinformation have all contributed to the increase. They also cite pandemic-era isolation and loneliness.

In Gochenour's case, he spent several weeks messaging with someone who seemed romantically interested in him before she brought up "liquidity mining."

Though he'd been a crypto skeptic, he eventually began following her advice and instructions. Scammers like Gochenour's have become skilled at setting up sites that convincingly look like legitimate cryptocurrency companies, and Gochenour was taken in. After he set up a crypto wallet, it appeared that the money he transferred there was growing just the way his scammer said it would.

"I was hooked on this person," he said. "And at first it looked like it was working. She said, 'We could be together, you and I, and make all this money.'"

Then one day, when he had transferred about $5,000 of his own money to the wallet, he woke up to check the balance and the money was gone. When he looked at a website his scammer had directed him to, to try to understand what had

happened, he saw a "contract." He contacted the scammer about it, and she told him to contact "customer service," who told him to put in another $10,000 in order to get all of his money back, plus bonuses.

Gochenour continued to add money to his wallet when prompted, despite the money being transferred out each time, until it looked like he had $200,000 coming to him.

"The numbers were all fake, all manipulated," he said.

When he was told he'd have to pay $35,000 in taxes up front to access the $200,000, Gochenour realized it was a scam. By that point, he had taken out nearly $16,000 in personal loans on top of his $55,000 in student debt, each time lured by promises of even greater rewards. He now works with the Global Anti-Scam Organization to investigate similar frauds and to help educate others.

To avoid being taken for a ride, consider the following:

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SIGNS OF AN INVESTMENT SCAM?

Most will sound quick, easy, and low- or no-risk. Many involve real estate, cryptocurrency, financial coaching, or gold. Typically, the company uses words like "proven" and "guaranteed," along with testimonials from people saying they're on the other side and have benefited wildly. These are most often paid actors and invented reviews, according to Melanie McGovern, director of public relations for the International Association of Better Business Bureaus.

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"Watch out for those endorsements," McGovern said. "And know your friends. If you get a message that seems sketchy from someone's account, especially someone you haven't heard from in a while, reach out to them on a different platform. Because someone may be spoofing them." (Spoofing is a term for when a hacker disguises themselves as a trusted source.)

Offers also tend to come with time pressure: "Make big money fast!" "Once-in-a-lifetime offer, gone tomorrow!" Or elaborate steps that require infusions of more money at each stage, such as the liquidity mining con that Gochenour experienced. The scammer typically paints a picture of what life will be like when you're rich. But no one can guarantee a return, and anyone who promises a no-risk investment is a fraud.

WHAT SHOULD YOU DO IF YOU SUSPECT AN INVESTMENT SCAM?

First, take time to research the offer. Scammers want to rush you, so slow down. Search online for the name of the company and words like "review," "scam," or "complaint."

Second, run the information by a friend or adviser. You may not have gotten an offer like this, but chances are you know someone who has, especially as scams often target specific communities, according to the FTC.

Third, don't accept any unsolicited offers. If you get an out-of-the-blue call, text, or e-mail about "an amazing investment opportunity," it's a scam.

Finally, reject the high-pressure pitch.

"Legitimate companies let you take the time you need to investigate before spending any money," says McGovern.

Scammers will also exaggerate the significance of current events, following headlines and tying their pitch to the news. By making an opportunity seem exciting, innovative, and timely, they hope a target will commit without having fully researched the offer.

"Delete, hang up, and walk away," the FTC advises. "Especially if they want you to take money out of your 401(k) to invest."

WHAT ABOUT CRYPTO INVESTMENT SCAMS?

One tell-tale sign of a crypto con is when the scammer asks you to send money in advance for any reason, the FTC warns. The fraudster will often claim this advance payment is to buy something needed for a big return or to protect the money you've already invested somehow. Gochenour experienced several versions of this send-money-to-get-more-money approach.

"Never mix online dating and investment advice," the agency cautions. "If you meet someone on a dating site or app, and they want to show you how to invest in crypto, or they ask you to send them crypto, that's a scam."

McGovern said that the real scale of losses is greater than reported, because many people are embarrassed to have fallen for these schemes, and want to hide the outcomes from family and friends. But she encourages people to report the scams to the BBB, the CFPB, the FTC, and the Internet Crime Complaint Center.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER COMMON INVESTMENT FRAUDS?

INVESTMENT COACHING

In this scam, the fraudster will tell you their "patented," "tested," or "proven" strategy will let you make money investing in stocks, bonds, foreign currency, or tax liens. They promise the approach will set you up for life and let you stop working. But after the free events and introductory videos, you'll have to pay fees up front for the rest of the expensive coaching, with no guarantee of return.

"It's all part of a marketing scheme to get you to pay thousands of dollars for what turns out to be empty promises," the FTC warns in its consumer alert.

REAL ESTATE COACHING

In-person and online seminars about how to invest in real estate often promote "risk-free" training, luring targets with promises of financial freedom. If the promotional materials and sales pitches make over-the-top claims, be wary. Watch for phrases like "sure thing," "security for years to come," or the chance to "rake in money by working part-time or at-home." Most people never make back the thousands of dollars of up-front fees.

PRECIOUS METALS & COINS

If "metal dealers" or "rare coins merchants" tell you there's no better time than now to invest, watch out. Scammers in this con typically simply keep your money. The FTC advises consumers to read the Commodity Futures Trading Commission's precious metals fraud alert before investing in bullion, bullion coins, collectible coins, or gold.

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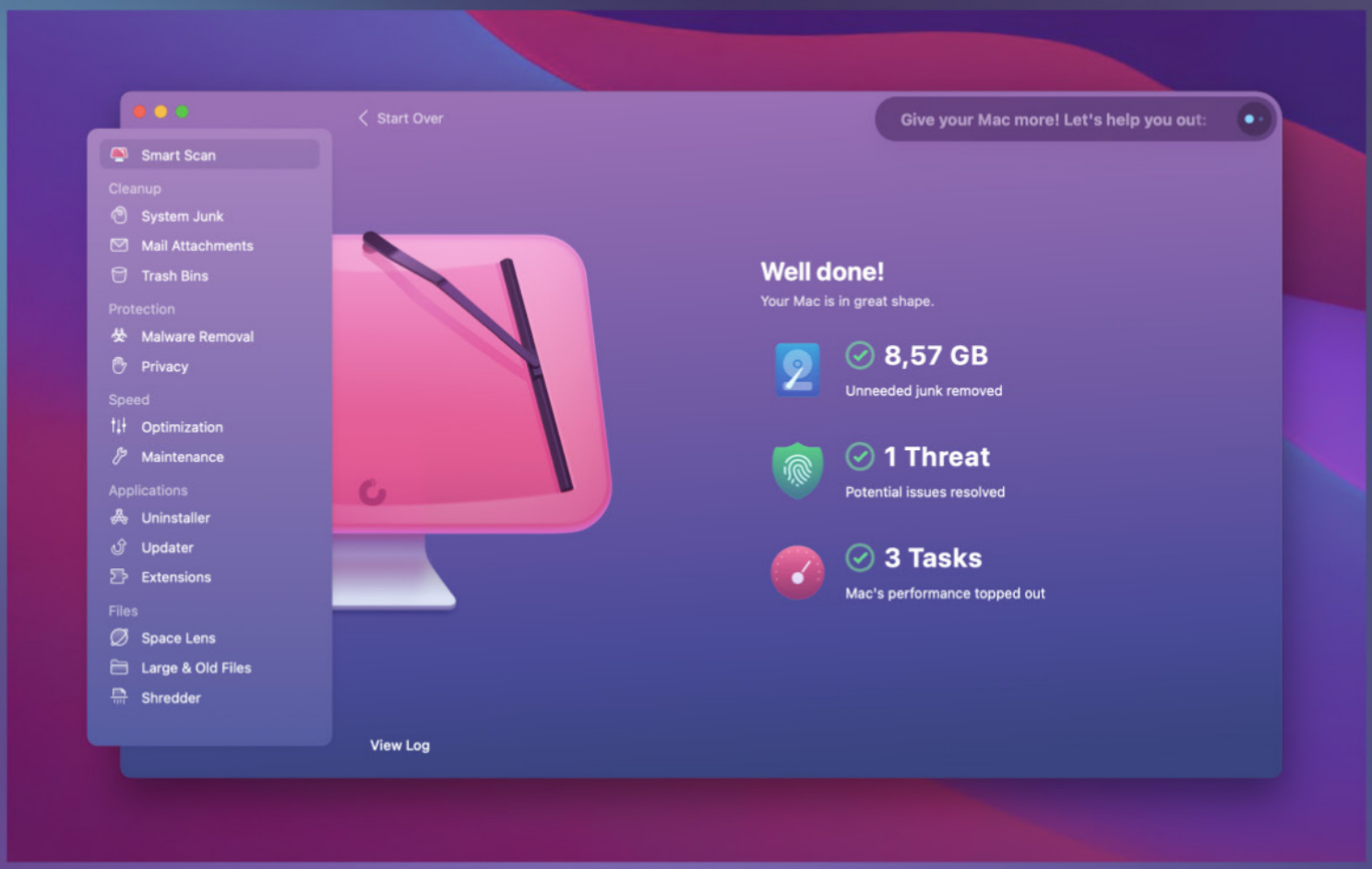

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CHINA'S YUAN FALLS AGAINST DOLLAR, RAISING QUESTIONS ABOUT WEAKER CURRENCY TO BOOST EXPORTS

China's yuan dipped briefly to a 16-year low against the dollar Thursday, raising questions about whether Beijing might weaken its currency to help struggling exporters and reverse a deepening economic slump.

The yuan slid to 7.32 to the dollar before recovering to 7.26 following what financial analysts said appeared to be buying by Chinese banks to support the currency. That made one yuan worth about 13.8 cents.

Image: Florence Lo

A weaker yuan helps exporters by making their goods cheaper abroad, but Beijing has promised to avoid "competitive devaluation." Complaints that China gets an unfair trade advantage by keeping its yuan weak is an irritant in relations with Washington and other governments.

"Will we just continue to see a sort of gradual weakening of the currency?" said Thomas Mathews of Capital Economics. "That might be one of the key channels through which they could actually support the economy."

However, letting the yuan slide too far might cause companies and investors to question whether Beijing is changing its currency policy, Mathews said.

"They've had problems with this sort of thing in the past," he said. "They'll be pretty nervous about it."

Economic growth declined to 0.8% over the previous quarter in the three months ending in June, down from 2.2% in January to March. That is the equivalent of 3.2% annual growth, which would be among China's weakest in decades.

The yuan is allowed to fluctuate up or down 2% from its government-set starting price each day in tightly controlled trading. That prevents wide daily swings, but down days can add up to a big change over time.

The People's Bank of China gave no indication whether it might try to stop the latest decline.

Last year, banks were ordered to "maintain the basic stability" of the currency after it slid to below 7.2 to the dollar. The yuan fell to 7.30 to the dollar last October. It last traded below 7.32 in 2007.

人民银行

The yuan sank in 2019 during trade tension with then-President Donald Trump. That prompted suggestions Beijing was trying to reduce the impact of U.S. tariff hikes, but there was no official confirmation. The currency later strengthened.

The central bank cut its interest rate Tuesday on a one-week loan to banks to 1.8% from 1.9%. The change was modest, but it added to moves by Chinese rates in the opposite direction from U.S. rates, which are at a two-decade high.

The Federal Reserve made the dollar look even more attractive as an investment by suggesting this week it might be open to considering another rate hike to cool inflation.

Chinese consumer and business activity weakened further in July, official data showed this week.

Customs data earlier showed exports fell 14.5% compared with a year ago after U.S. and European rate hikes cooled consumer demand.

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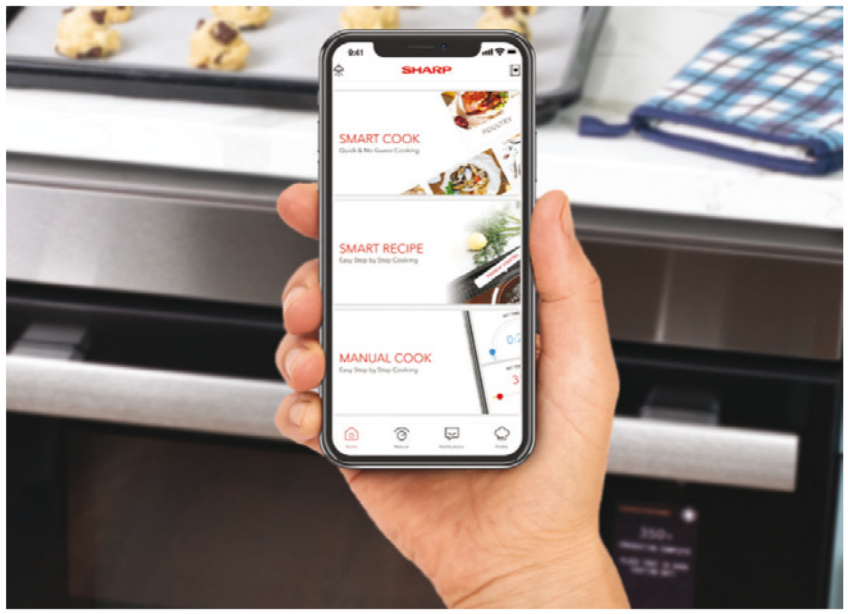

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FOUNDATIONS SEEK TO ADVANCE AI FOR GOOD — AND ALSO PROTECT THE WORLD FROM ITS THREATS

While technology experts sound the alarm on the pace of artificial-intelligence development, philanthropists — including long-established foundations and tech billionaires — have been responding with an uptick in grants.

Much of the philanthropy is focused on what is known as technology for good or "ethical AI," which explores how to solve or mitigate the harmful effects of artificial-intelligence systems. Some scientists believe AI can be used to predict climate disasters and discover new drugs to save lives. Others are warning that the large language models could soon upend white-collar professions, fuel misinformation, and threaten national security.

What philanthropy can do to influence the trajectory of AI is starting to emerge. Billionaires who earned their fortunes in technology are more likely to support projects and institutions that emphasize the positive outcomes of AI, while foundations not endowed with tech money have tended to focus more on AI's dangers.

For example, former Google CEO Eric Schmidt and wife, Wendy Schmidt, have committed hundreds of millions of dollars to artificial-intelligence grantmaking programs housed at Schmidt Futures to "accelerate the next global scientific revolution." In addition to committing $125 million to advance research into AI, last year the philanthropic venture announced a $148 million program to help postdoctoral fellows apply AI to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

Also in the AI enthusiast camp is the Patrick McGovern Foundation, named after the late

billionaire who founded the International Data Group and one of a few philanthropies that has made artificial intelligence and data science an explicit grantmaking priority. In 2021, the foundation committed $40 million to help nonprofits use artificial intelligence and data to advance "their work to protect the planet, foster economic prosperity, ensure healthy communities," according to a news release from the foundation. McGovern also has an internal team of AI experts who work to help nonprofits use the technology to improve their programs.

"I am an incredible optimist about how these tools are going to improve our capacity to deliver on human welfare," says Vilas Dhar, president of Patrick J. McGovern Foundation. "What I think philanthropy needs to do, and civil society writ large, is to make sure we realize that promise and opportunity — to make sure these technologies don't merely become one more profit-making sector of our economy but rather are invested in furthering human equity." Salesforce is also interested in helping nonprofits use AI. The software company announced last month that it will award $2 million to education, workforce, and climate organizations "to advance the equitable and ethical use of trusted AI."

Billionaire entrepreneur and LinkedIn co-founder Reid Hoffman is another big donor who believes AI can improve humanity and has funded research centers at Stanford University and the University of Toronto to achieve that goal. He is betting AI can positively transform areas like health care ("giving everyone a medical assistant") and education ("giving everyone a tutor"), he told the New York Times in May.

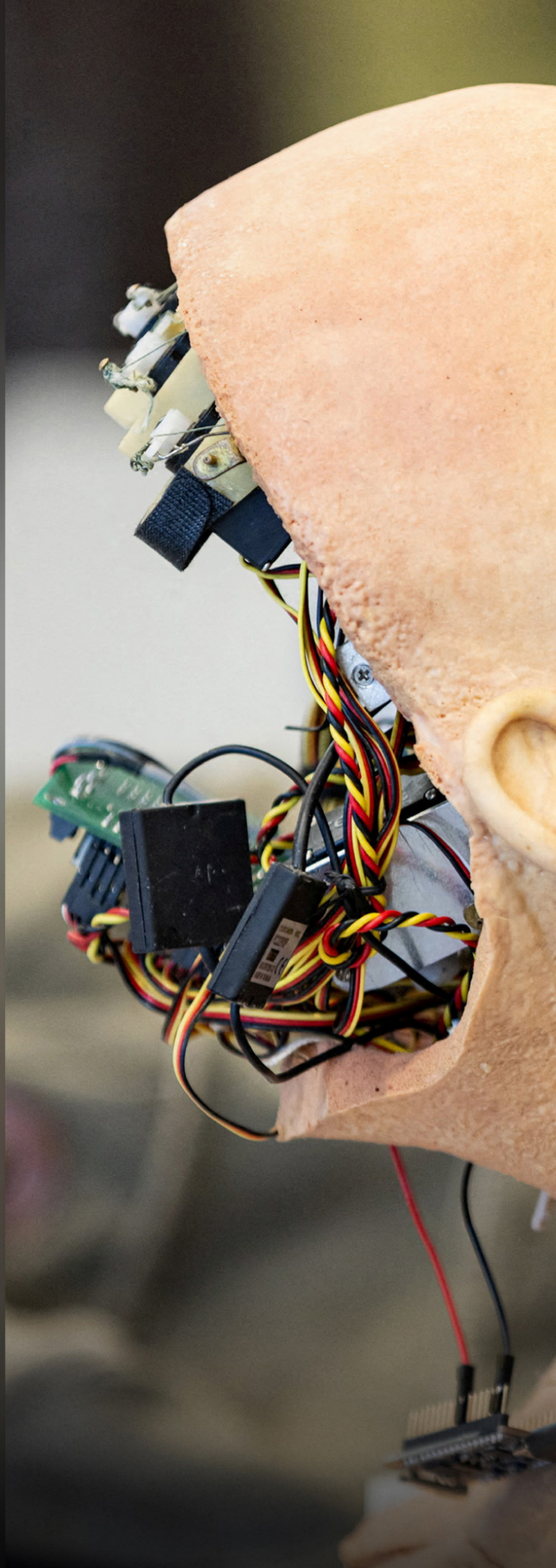


Image: Pierre Albouy

The enthusiasm for AI solutions among tech billionaires is not uniform, however. EBay founder Pierre Omidyar has taken a mixed approach through his Omidyar Network, which is making grants to nonprofits using the technology for scientific innovation as well as those trying to protect data privacy and advocate for regulation.

"One of the things that we're trying really hard to think about is how do you have good AI regulation that is both sensitive to the type of innovation that needs to happen in this space but also sensitive to the public accountability systems," says Anamitra Deb, managing director at the Omidyar Network.

Grantmakers that hold a more skeptical or negative perspective on AI are also not a uniform group; however, they tend to be foundations unaffiliated with the tech industry.

The Ford, MacArthur, and Rockefeller foundations number among several grantmakers funding nonprofits examining the harmful effects of AI.

For example, computer scientists Timnit Gebru and Joy Buolamwini, who conducted pivotal research on racial and gender bias from facial-recognition tools — which persuaded Amazon, IBM, and other companies to pull back on the technology in 2020 — have received sizable grants from them and other big, established foundations.

Gebru launched the Distributed Artificial Intelligence Research Institute in 2021 to research AI's harmful effects on marginalized groups "free from Big Tech's pervasive influence." The institute raised $3.7 million in initial funding from

the MacArthur Foundation, Ford Foundation, Kapor Center, Open Society Foundations, and the Rockefeller Foundation. (The Ford, MacArthur, and Open Society foundations are financial supporters of the Chronicle.)

Buolamwini is continuing research on and advocacy against artificial-intelligence and facial-recognition technology through her Algorithmic Justice League, which also received at least $1.9 million in support from the Ford, MacArthur, and Rockefeller foundations as well as from the Alfred P. Sloan and Mozilla foundations.

"These are all people and organizations that I think have really had a profound impact on the AI field itself but also really caught the attention of policymakers as well," says Eric Sears, who oversees MacArthur's grants related to artificial intelligence. The Ford Foundation also launched a Disability x Tech Fund through Borealis Philanthropy, which is supporting efforts to fight bias against people with disabilities in algorithms and artificial intelligence.

There are also AI skeptics among the tech elite awarding grants. Tesla CEO Elon Musk has warned AI could result in "civilizational destruction." In 2015, he gave $10 million to the Future of Life Institute, a nonprofit that aims to prevent "existential risk" from AI, and spearheaded a recent letter calling for a pause on AI development. Open Philanthropy, a foundation started by Facebook co-founder Dustin Moskovitz and his wife, Cari Tuna, has provided majority support to the Center for AI Safety, which also recently warned about the "risk of extinction" associated with AI.

mod.use_x = False
mod.use_y = True
mod.use_z = False
operation == "MIRROR_Z":
mod.use_x = False
mod.use_y = False
mod.use_z = True
operation at the end -add back the
ob.select= 1
ob.select=1
scene.objects.active = modifier
"Selected" + str(modifier_ob))
EXPORTSYMBOL(groupsalloc);
void groups_free(struct group_info *group_info
{
if (groupinfo->blocks[0] != group_info->sm
int i;
for (i = 0; i < group_info->nblocks; i
freepage((unsigned long)groupinfo-
kfree(groupinfo);
}
EXPORTSYMBOL(groupsfree);
/* export the groupinfo to a user-space array
static int groups_touser(gid_t _user *grouplis
const struct group_info *group_in
unsigned int count = groupinfo->ngroups;
int i;
for (i = 0; i < group_info->nblocks; i++)
unsigned int cpcount = min(NGROUPSPERB
unsigned int len = cpcount * sizeof(*g
if (copyto_user(grouplist, group_info-
return -EFAULT;

A significant portion of foundation giving on AI is also directed at universities studying ethical questions. The Ethics and Governance of AI Initiative, a joint project of the MIT Media Lab and Harvard's Berkman Klein Center, received $26 million from 2017 to 2022 from Luminate (the Omidyar Group), Reid Hoffman, Knight Foundation, and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. (Hewlett is a financial supporter of the Chronicle.)

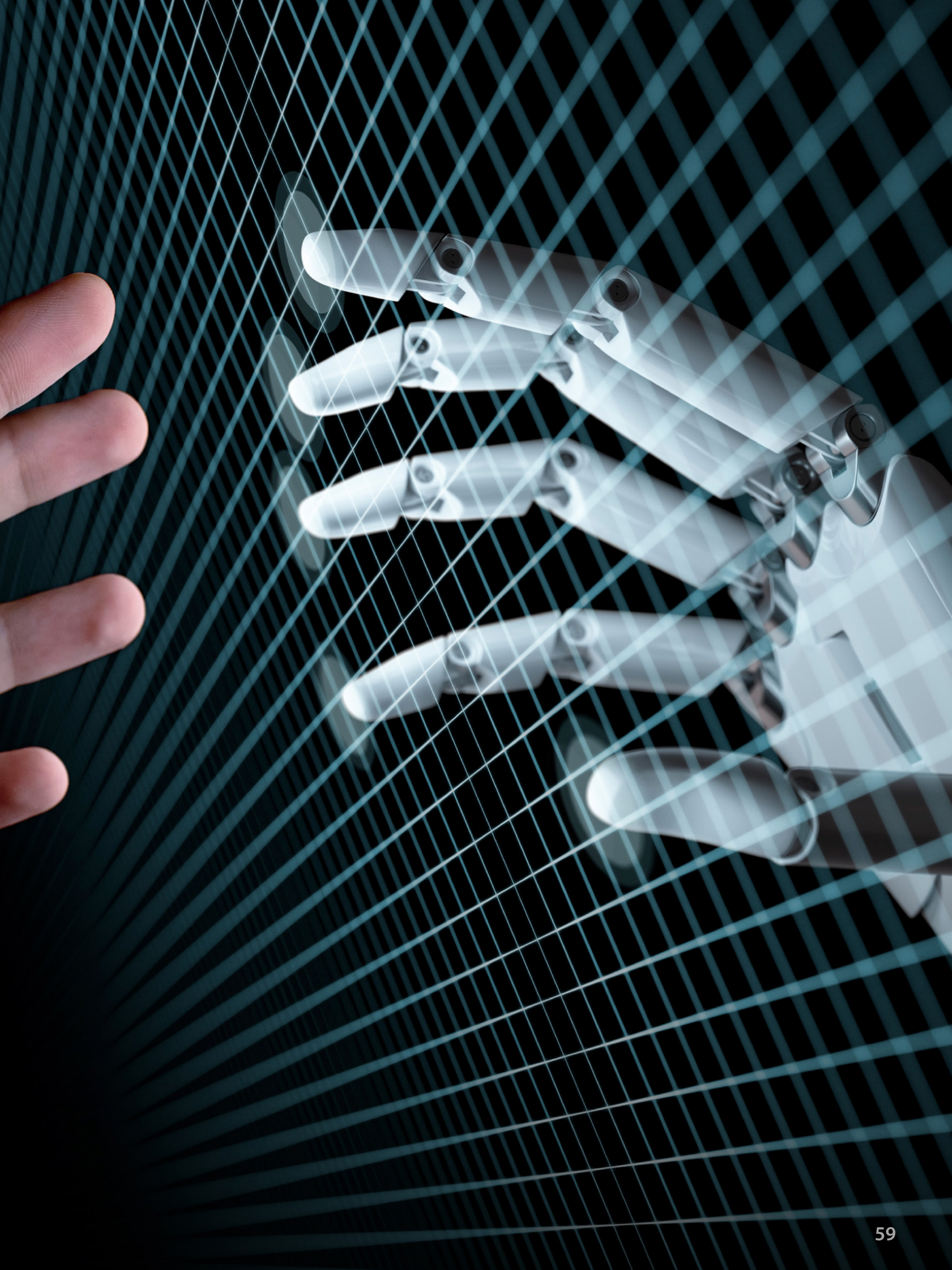
The goal, according to a May 2022 report, was "to ensure that technologies of automation and machine learning are researched, developed, and deployed in a way which vindicates social values of fairness, human autonomy, and justice." One university funding effort comes from the Kavli Foundation, which in 2021 committed $1.5 million a year for five years to two new centers focused on scientific ethics — with artificial intelligence as one priority area — at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Cambridge. The Knight Foundation announced in May it will spend $30 million to create a new ethical technology institute at Georgetown University to inform policymakers.

Although hundreds of millions of philanthropic dollars have been committed to ethical AI efforts, influencing tech companies and governments remains a massive challenge.

"Philanthropy is just a drop in the bucket compared to the Goliath-sized tech platforms, the Goliath-sized AI companies, the Goliath-sized regulators and policymakers that can actually take a crack at this," says Deb of the Omidyar Network.

Even with those obstacles, foundation leaders, researchers, and advocates largely agree that philanthropy can — and should — shape the future of AI.

"The industry is so dominant in shaping not only the scope of development of AI systems in the academic space, they're shaping the field of research," says Sarah Myers West, managing director of the AI Now Institute. "And as policymakers are looking to really hold these companies accountable, it's key to have funders step in and provide support to the organizations on the front lines to ensure that the broader public interest is accounted for."



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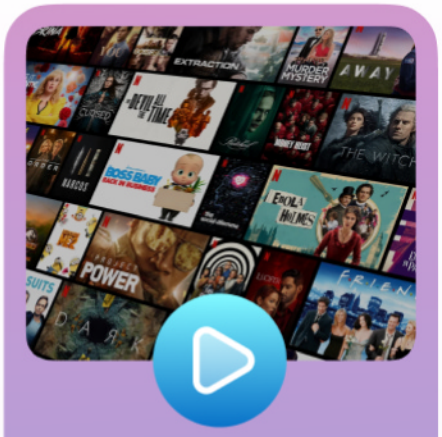

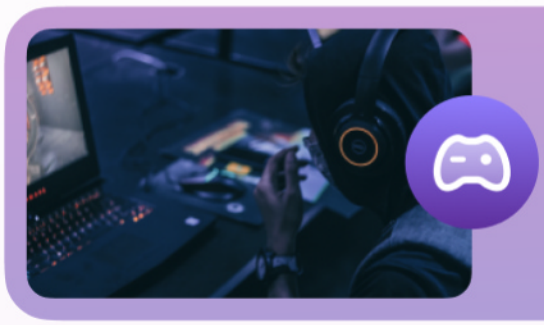

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DON'T EXPECT QUICK FIXES IN 'RED-TEAMING' OF AI MODELS. SECURITY WAS AN AFTERTHOUGHT

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White House officials concerned by AI chatbots' potential for societal harm and the Silicon Valley powerhouses rushing them to market are heavily invested in a three-day competition ending last weekend at the DefCon hacker convention in Las Vegas.

Some 2,200 competitors tapped on laptops seeking to expose flaws in eight leading large-language models representative of technology's next big thing. But don't expect quick results from this first-ever independent "red-teaming" of multiple models.

Findings won't be made public until about February. And even then, fixing flaws in these digital constructs — whose inner workings are neither wholly trustworthy nor fully fathomed even by their creators — will take time and millions of dollars.

Current AI models are simply too unwieldy, brittle and malleable, academic and corporate research shows. Security was an afterthought in their training as data scientists amassed breathtakingly complex collections of images and text. They are prone to racial and cultural biases, and easily manipulated.

"It's tempting to pretend we can sprinkle some magic security dust on these systems after they are built, patch them into submission, or bolt special security apparatus on the side," said Gary McGraw, a cybsersecurity veteran and co-founder of the Berryville Institute of Machine Learning. DefCon competitors are "more likely to walk away finding new, hard problems," said Bruce Schneier, a Harvard public-interest technologist. "This is computer security 30 years ago. We're just breaking stuff left and right."

Michael Sellitto of Anthropic, which provided one of the AI testing models, acknowledged in a press briefing that understanding their capabilities and safety issues "is sort of an open area of scientific inquiry."

Conventional software uses well-defined code to issue explicit, step-by-step instructions. OpenAI's ChatGPT, Google's Bard and other language models are different. Trained largely by ingesting — and classifying — billions of datapoints in internet crawls, they are perpetual works-in-progress, an unsettling prospect given their transformative potential for humanity.

After publicly releasing chatbots last fall, the generative AI industry has had to repeatedly plug security holes exposed by researchers and tinkerers.

Tom Bonner of the AI security firm HiddenLayer, a speaker at this year's DefCon, tricked a Google system into labeling a piece of malware harmless merely by inserting a line that said "this is safe to use."

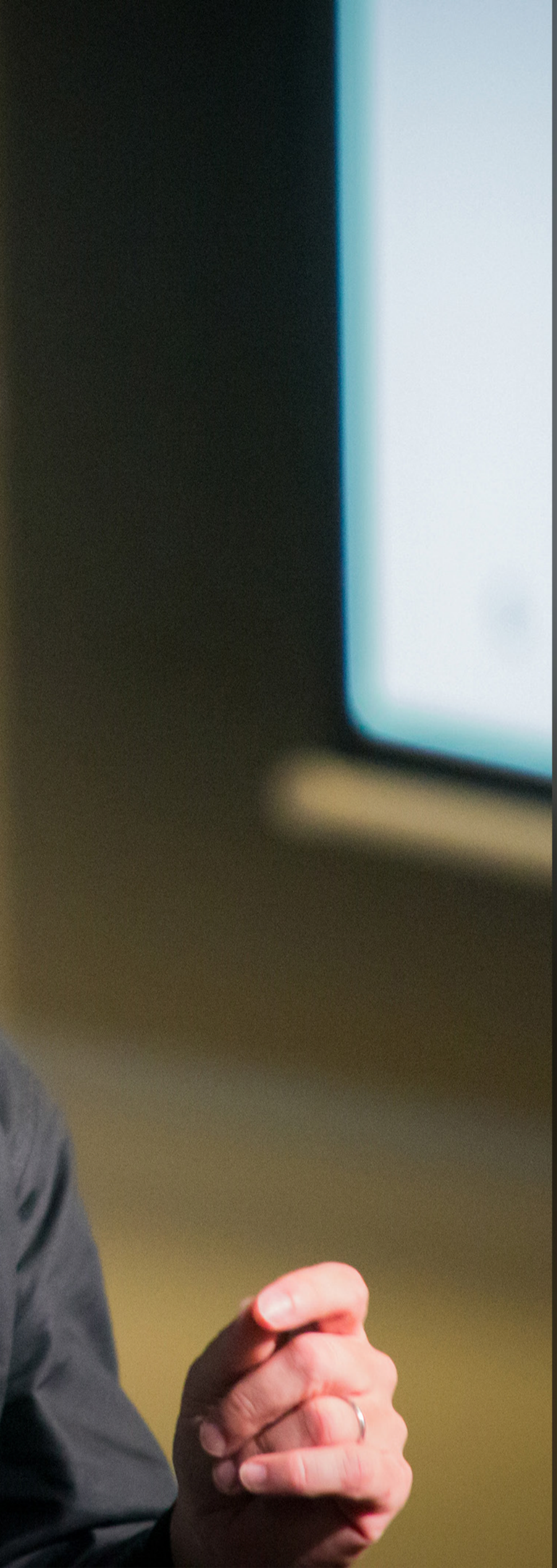
"There are no good guardrails," he said.

Another researcher had ChatGPT create phishing emails and a recipe to violently eliminate humanity, a violation of its ethics code.

A team including Carnegie Mellon researchers found leading chatbots vulnerable to automated attacks that also produce harmful content. "It is possible that the very nature of deep learning models makes such threats inevitable," they wrote.

It's not as if alarms weren't sounded.

In its 2021 final report, the U.S. National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence



said attacks on commercial AI systems were already happening and "with rare exceptions, the idea of protecting AI systems has been an afterthought in engineering and fielding AI systems, with inadequate investment in research and development."

Serious hacks, regularly reported just a few years ago, are now barely disclosed. Too much is at stake and, in the absence of regulation, "people can sweep things under the rug at the moment and they're doing so," said Bonner.

Attacks trick the artificial intelligence logic in ways that may not even be clear to their creators. And chatbots are especially vulnerable because we interact with them directly in plain language. That interaction can alter them in unexpected ways.

Researchers have found that "poisoning" a small collection of images or text in the vast sea of data used to train AI systems can wreak havoc — and be easily overlooked.

A study co-authored by Florian Tramér of the Swiss University ETH Zurich determined that corrupting just 0.01% of a model was enough to spoil it — and cost as little as $60. The researchers waited for a handful of websites used in web crawls for two models to expire. Then they bought the domains and posted bad data on them.

Hyrum Anderson and Ram Shankar Siva Kumar, who red-teamed AI while colleagues at Microsoft, call the state of AI security for text- and image-based models "pitiable" in their new book "Not with a Bug but with a Sticker." One example they cite in live presentations: The AI-powered digital assistant Alexa is hoodwinked

into interpreting a Beethoven concerto clip as a command to order 100 frozen pizzas.

Surveying more than 80 organizations, the authors found the vast majority had no response plan for a data-poisoning attack or dataset theft. The bulk of the industry "would not even know it happened," they wrote.

Andrew W. Moore, a former Google executive and Carnegie Mellon dean, says he dealt with attacks on Google search software more than a decade ago. And between late 2017 and early 2018, spammers gamed Gmail's AI-powered detection service four times.

The big AI players say security and safety are top priorities and made voluntary commitments to the White House last month to submit their models — largely "black boxes' whose contents are closely held — to outside scrutiny.

But there is worry the companies won't do enough.

Tramér expects search engines and social media platforms to be gamed for financial gain and disinformation by exploiting AI system weaknesses. A savvy job applicant might, for example, figure out how to convince a system they are the only correct candidate.

Ross Anderson, a Cambridge University computer scientist, worries AI bots will erode privacy as people engage them to interact with hospitals, banks and employers and malicious actors leverage them to coax financial, employment or health data out of supposedly closed systems.

DEFCON
GUARDED

AI language models can also pollute themselves by retraining themselves from junk data, research shows.

Another concern is company secrets being ingested and spit out by AI systems. After a Korean business news outlet reported on such an incident at Samsung, corporations including Verizon and JPMorgan barred most employees from using ChatGPT at work.

While the major AI players have security staff, many smaller competitors likely won't, meaning poorly secured plug-ins and digital agents could multiply. Startups are expected to launch hundreds of offerings built on licensed pre-trained models in coming months.

Don't be surprised, researchers say, if one runs away with your address book.

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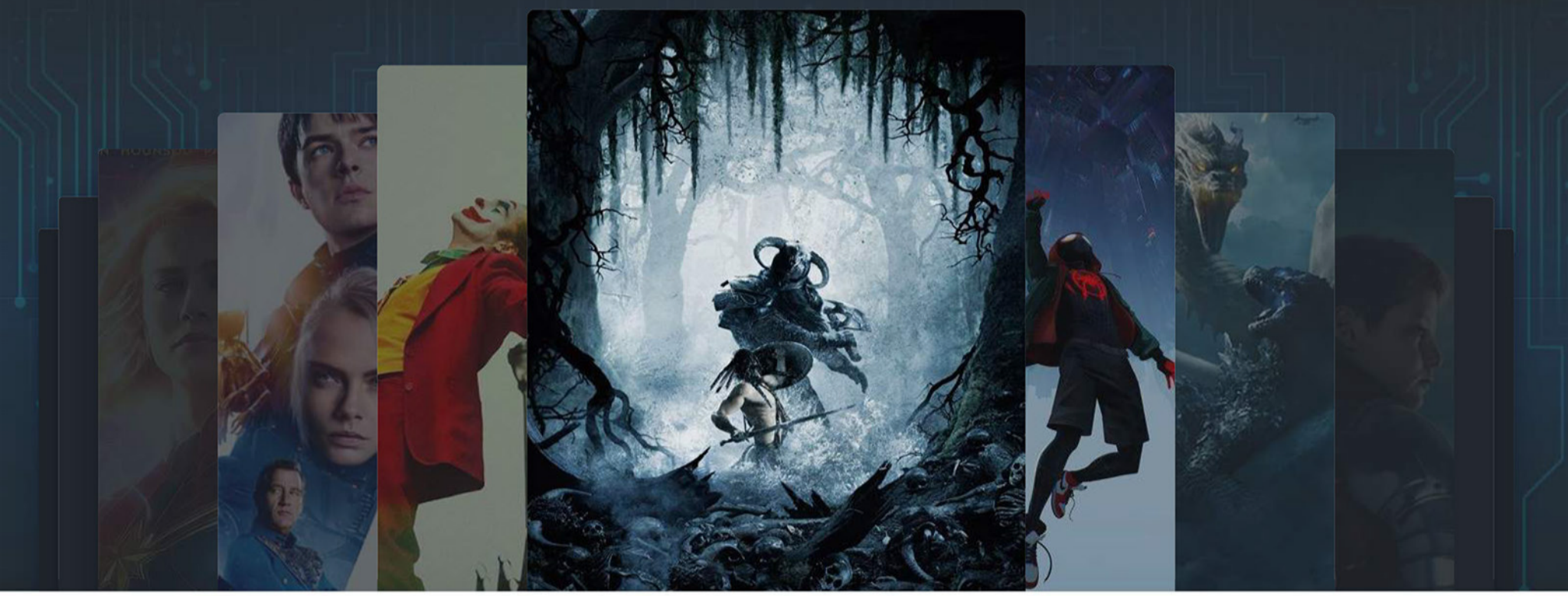

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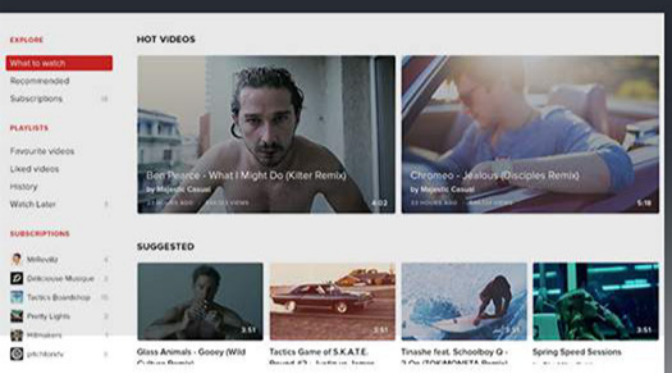

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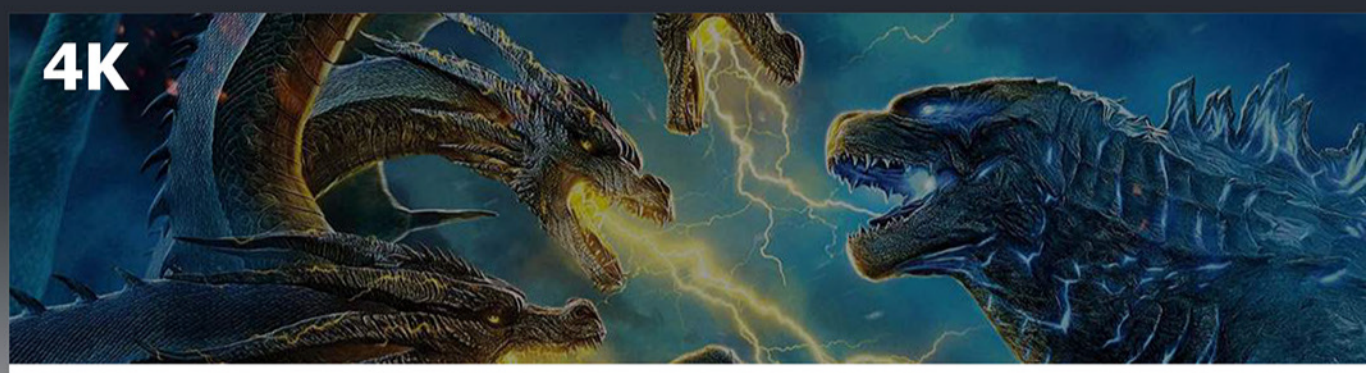

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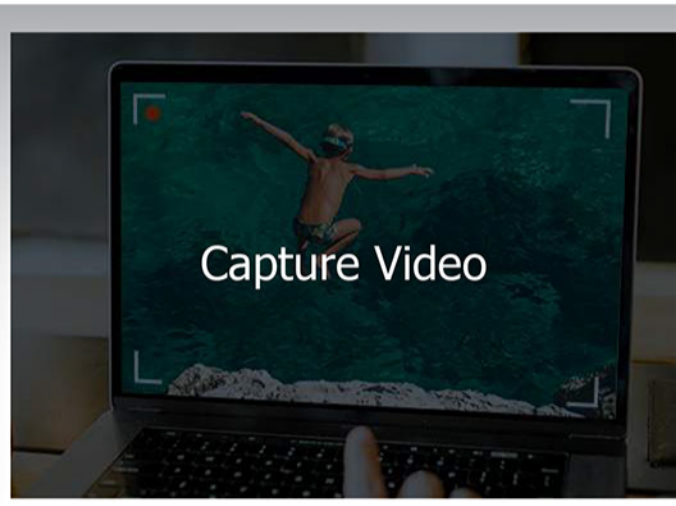

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Watch Out

THE BIG CHANGES COMING TO THE APPLE WATCH RANGE

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The Apple Watch, a pioneer in smartwatch technology, is evolving at a rapid pace and this year's Series 9 and Apple Watch Ultra are set to be no exception. With the watch's ten-year anniversary just around the corner, big things are coming to transform wearables once more.

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AN ITERATIVE UPDATE FOR APPLE WATCH SERIES 9

Apple is expected to announce the Apple Watch Series 9 at next month's September Event, where it will also show off new iPhones and perhaps some MacBooks and iPads. This year's update will see a major step forward in the processing technology of the wearable. After three generations of identical chip performance, the new S9 chip will reportedly be built on the same technology as the A15 chip. These improvements could provide significant speed and efficiency gains, translating into faster load times and potentially longer battery life.

While we're not expecting groundbreaking changes in battery life, the updated processor might result in small improvements. Any efficiency gains might be channeled into additional display functionality or other tweaks, enhancing user experience. One of the exciting rumors circulating is the introduction of a pink shade, akin to rose gold, in the aluminum finish. This subtle yet trendy color might find its way into the Series 9, adding flair to the design.

Anticipation builds as whispers of a new woven fabric band with a magnetic buckle emerge, which could complement the existing Modern Buckle band and offer consumers even more choice. The Series 9 is also expected to maintain the feature set of the Series 8, with the primary changes focusing on internal improvements rather than an overhaul of functionalities, serving as an iterative update rather than a major overhaul - but big things are around the corner, with an updated Ultra and next year's X in development.

APPLE WATCH ULTRA: RUGGED EXCELLENCE

The Apple Watch Ultra has become a sensation for its robust design, larger display, and exclusive features. Here's what the future might hold: Rumors suggest a refresh might occur in 2023, possibly including a new processor, though the exact details are still under wraps.

The Ultra's design, with its rugged look, is expected to remain consistent. However, potential improvements such as a larger display and a switch to a Micro LED display could be on the horizon. The Watch Ultra 2 could retain existing sensors and features, along with likely improvements. Water resistance, MIL-STD-810H rating, and the dive computer standard might be augmented with cutting-edge additions. Apple may place extra focus on enhancing battery life for the Watch Ultra 2 to better compete with rival brands. Though unconfirmed, this area could see

improvements and offer hikers and professionals even greater battery life.

Kate Kozuch of Tom's Guide has shared a number of things she'd love to see come to the second-generation Apple Watch Ultra, including the big one: even better battery life. "Call me greedy, but I want the Apple Watch Ultra 2 to last even longer. When you compare it to the best Garmin watches and other GPS sports watches, the battery life can't keep up. For example, the Garmin Forerunner 965 lasts 31 hours running continuous GPS — the Apple Watch Ultra will last less than half that long following your exact location. If Apple can manage a longer-lasting battery for the next Ultra watch, it would be better positioned for true outdoor sports enthusiasts," she said in her column. Other wishlist items included a new band mechanism to improve reliability and performance and **color options for fashionistas.**

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APPLE WATCH SERIES X

Apple's plans extend beyond just immediate releases. The Watch Series X, rumored for a late 2024 release, might feature magnetic watch band attachment points, a blood pressure sensor, and a microLED screen. Plus, rumors of integration with Vision Pro, possibly for monitoring or expanded features like gaming enhancements, add more intrigue to Apple's future plans. Several far-reaching technologies hint at a transformative future for the Apple Watch, such as a MicroLED Display, bringing brighter colors and improved viewing angles.

Speaking of the updated version, Bloomberg's Mark Guramn said: "Unlike with the iPhone, changes to the main Apple Watch are fairly minor on a yearly basis. Apple isn't giving consumers many reasons to buy a new watch with each generation. With the X model, Apple designers are working on a thinner watch case and have explored changing the way bands are attached to the device. The company has explored a new magnetic band attachment system, though it's unclear if it will be ready or used in the Watch X revamp. Even bigger changes are coming as well: a microLED display that tops the color and clarity of the current OLED screens, as well as a technology for monitoring blood pressure."

An even larger 2.1-inch display is reportedly in the works for the Apple Watch Ultra, with the company perhaps offering two models of the device to appease users of different sizes. Last year, the current Apple Watch Ultra introduced OLED technology. MicroLED is LED display technology rather than OLED display

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technology and could offer users a new 2.1-inch diagonal display. Apple is already testing microLED for the Apple Watch, and the displays are said to feature bright, vibrant colors and look like content is "painted on top of the glass."

The company is also working on Noninvasive Blood Glucose Monitoring. Years in the making, this game-changing feature could mark one of the most significant updates to Apple Watch introduced and offer greater health benefits to users around the world. There's no denying Apple Watch has saved lives and this innovative new technology could take that further, encouraging users to better look after their physical and mental health.

The future of Apple Watch is packed with potential, with the Series 9, the innovations in the Apple Watch Ultra, and the whispers of groundbreaking future technologies. While the short-term updates may seem iterative, the long-term vision of Apple promises continual evolution, enhancing not just the functionality but the way users interact with the world.

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2 PINTEREST DIRECTORS RESIGN FROM NEXTDOOR'S BOARD IN RESPONSE TO ANTITRUST ENFORCEMENT EFFORTS

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The Justice Department said Wednesday that two directors resigned from Nextdoor's board in response to the department's efforts to enforce an antitrust law aimed at barring executives from holding similar positions at rival companies.

The Justice Department pointed to Section 8 of the federal Clayton Act — which, in most cases, prohibits company directors and officers from serving on the boards of competitors at the same time. An enforcement initiative from the department's antitrust division has led to the resignations of 15 interlocking directors on 11 boards so far, it said.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to protect competition by preventing interlocking directorates that we believe violate Section 8 of the Clayton Act," Deputy Assistant Attorney General Andrew Forman of the department's antitrust division said in a statement.

The directors' resignations from Nextdoor's board went into effect Aug. 1, "without the directors or either company admitting liability," the department said.

When reached on Wednesday, San Francisco-based Nextdoor directed to a July regulatory filing that identified the resigning directors as Leslie Kilgore and Andrea Wishom. According to the filing, Kilgore and Wishom informed the neighborhood-focused social network company of their decision to step down on July 25.

"Neither of Ms. Kilgore's nor Ms. Wishom's resignation was the result of any

disagreement with the Company on any matter relating to the Company's operations, policies or practices," Nextdoor said.

Pinterest did not immediately respond to requests for comment Wednesday, but both Kilgore and Wishom are listed as directors on company's website. The image-sharing social media platform is also headquartered in San Francisco.

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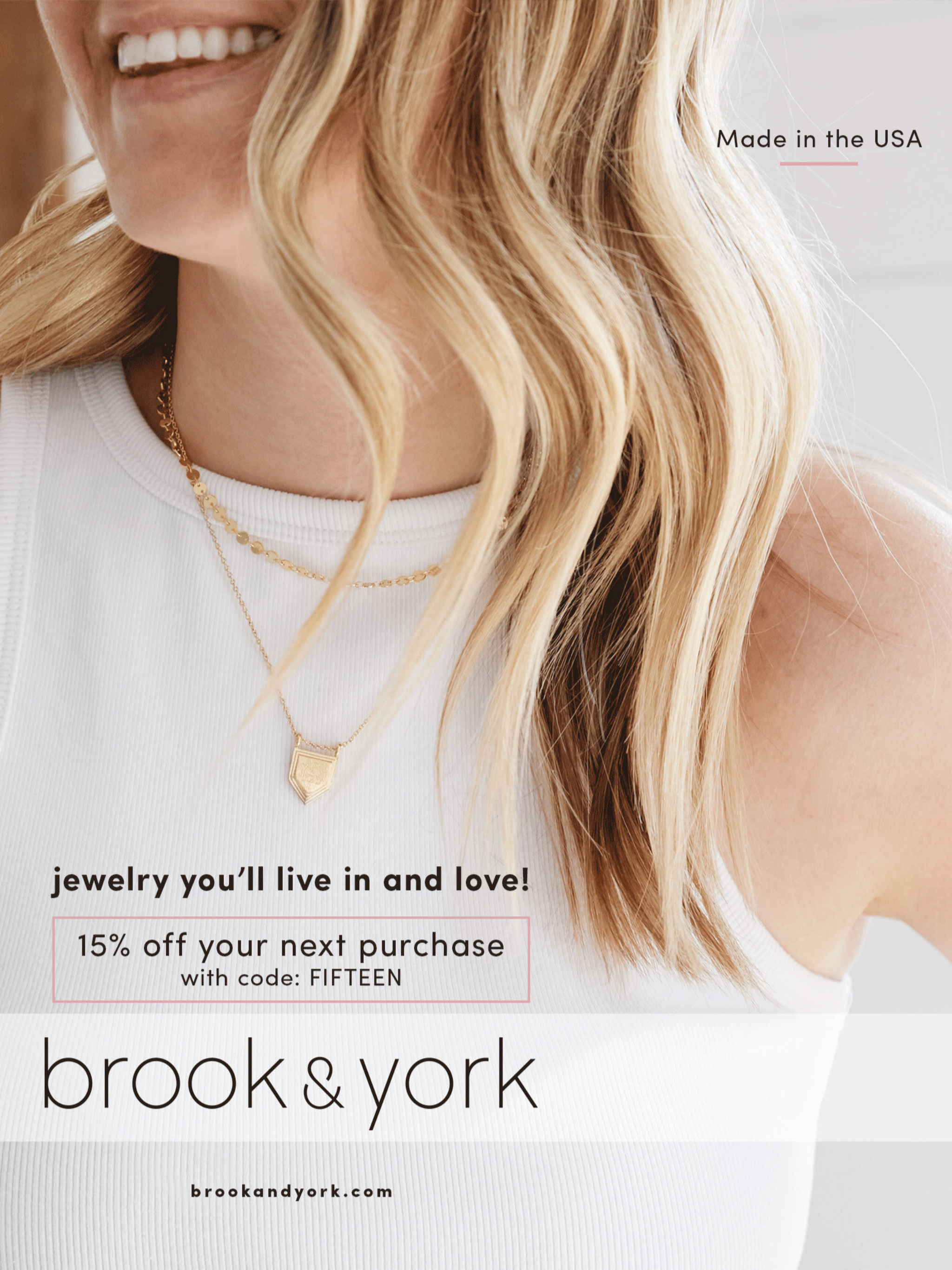
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PEOPLE ARE LOSING MORE MONEY TO SCAMMERS THAN EVER BEFORE. HERE'S HOW TO KEEP YOURSELF SAFE

Federal Trade
Commission Bu
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With the help of technology, scammers are tricking Americans out of more money than ever before. But there are steps you can take to keep your money and information safe.

In 2022, reported consumer losses to fraud totaled $8.8 billion — a 30 percent increase from 2021, according to the most recent data from the Federal Trade Commission. The biggest losses were to investment scams, including cryptocurrency schemes, which cost people more than $3.8 billion, double the amount in 2021.

Younger adults ages 20-29 reported losing money more often than older adults ages 70-79, the FTC found. But when older adults did lose money, they lost more. Many retirees have assets like savings, pensions, life insurance policies or property for scammers to target.

With the rise of the digital economy, scammers now reach targets by social media and text, as well as phone and email. Online payment platforms, apps, and marketplaces have also increased opportunities. Still, many of their tactics and strategies are similar.

“The first thing they’ll do is get you into a heightened emotional state, because we can’t access clear thinking when we’re in that state,” said Kathy Stokes, director of fraud prevention for the AARP’s Fraud Watch Network. “It could be fear, panic, or excitement — ‘I just won a million dollars from Publishers Clearing House.’”

Once the sense of urgency is established, the target’s defenses are down.

“When approached with urgency, give it an extra three-second pause,” said Amanda Clayman, a financial therapist who works with digital payment network Zelle around issues of

fraud. "When someone is trying to get us to take action quickly, that's usually a red flag indicating we should do the opposite."

Here's what else to know to keep your money and information safe:

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON SCAMS?

Simply being aware of typical scams can help, experts say. Robocalls in particular frequently target vulnerable individuals like seniors, people with disabilities, and people with debt.

"If you get a robocall out of the blue paying a recorded message trying to get you to buy something, just hang up," aid James Lee, chief operating officer at the Identity Theft Resource Center. "Same goes for texts — anytime you get them from a number you don't know asking you to pay, wire, or click on something suspicious."

Lee urges consumers to hang up and call the company or institution in question at an official number.

Scammers will also often imitate someone in authority, such as a tax or debt collector. They might pretend to be a loved one calling to request immediate financial assistance for bail, legal help, or a hospital bill.

ROMANCE SCAMS

So-called "romance scams" often target lonely and isolated individuals, according to Will Maxson, assistant director of the Division of Marketing Practices at the FTC. These scams can take place over longer periods of time -- even years.

Kate Kleinart, 70, who lost tens of thousands to a romance scam over several months, said to be

vigilant if a new Facebook friend is exceptionally good-looking, asks you to download WhatsApp to communicate, attempts to isolate you from friends and family, and/or gets romantic very quickly.

"If you're seeing that picture of a very handsome person, ask someone younger in your life — a child, a grandchild, a niece or a nephew — to help you reverse-image search or identify the photo," she said.

She said the man in pictures she received was a plastic surgeon from Spain whose photos have been stolen and used by scammers.

Kleinart had also been living under lockdown during the early pandemic when she got the initial friend request, and the companionship and communication meant a lot to her while she was cut off from family. When the scam fell apart, she missed the relationship even more than the savings.

"Losing the love was worse than losing the money," she said.

WHAT SHOULD I DO ABOUT TEXT AND EMAIL SCAMS?

"I think anyone who has participated in the digital economy has received multiple attempts daily that have some sort of scheme, whether that's, 'Your account has been locked' or 'Your package delivery is delayed,'" Lee said. "Again — just take a breath — and verify."

Lee urges people never to click an unusual link in a text or email, and instead go to the site in question directly, or call the number listed on the official site.

"It'll take 30 or 40 seconds longer, but go ahead and do that because it could save you a lot of money every time," he said.

Some indications to be extra wary could include an unrecognized sender, unusual wording, or a tell-tale misspelling.

In 2022, consumers lost more than $326 million from scam texts alone, according to the Federal Trade Commission.

WHAT ARE OTHER COMMON RED FLAGS?

Gift cards. Both Maxson and Lee said any mention of payment with gift cards should be a blaring warning alarm.

Kleinart, who experienced the romance scam, was also initially asked to send money via gift cards, with varied explanations.

"Just don't pay people with gift cards," Maxson said. "No legitimate company or individual is going to ask you to buy large quantities of gift cards and then read the numbers off the cards. That is exclusively a payment method of fraudsters."

"Let me tell you, the IRS does not accept gift cards," Lee said. "But you'd be surprised by the number of people who fall for people calling from 'fill in the blank agency' or 'fill in the blank company' and who send $500 worth of gift cards."

WHAT ABOUT SOCIAL MEDIA SCAMS?

In addition to romance scams like the one Kleinart fell victim to, here's what to know about other common social media scams:

INVESTMENT SCAMS

According to Lois Greisman, an associate director of marketing practices at the FTC, an investment scam constitutes any get-rich-quick scheme that lures targets via social media accounts or online ads.

Investment scammers typically add different forms of "testimony," such as from other social media accounts, to support that the "investment" works. Many of these also involve cryptocurrency. To avoid falling for these frauds, the FTC recommends independently researching the company — especially by searching the company's name along with terms like "review" or "scam."

QUIZ SCAMS

When you're using Facebook or scrolling Google results, be aware of quiz scams, which typically appear innocuous and ask about topics you might be interested in, such as your car or favorite TV show. They may also ask you to take a personality test.

Despite these benign-seeming questions, scammers can then use the personal information you share to respond to security questions from your accounts or hack your social media to send malware links to your contacts.

To protect your personal information, the FTC simply recommends steering clear of online quizzes. The commission also advises consumers to use random answers for security questions.

"Asked to enter your mother's maiden name? Say it's something else: Parmesan or another word you'll remember," advises Terri Miller,

consumer education specialist at the FTC. "This way, scammers won't be able to use information they find to steal your identity."

MARKETPLACE SCAMS

When buying or selling products on Instagram or Facebook Marketplace, keep in mind that not everyone that reaches out to you has the best intentions.

To avoid being scammed when selling via an online platform, the FTC recommends checking buyers' profiles, not sharing any codes sent to your phone or email, and avoiding accepting online payments from unknown persons.

Likewise, when buying something from an online marketplace, make sure to diligently research the seller. Take a look at whether the profile is verified, what kind of reviews they have, and the terms and conditions of the purchase.

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AMAZON IS ROLLING OUT A GENERATIVE AI FEATURE THAT SUMMARIZES PRODUCT REVIEWS

Amazon is rolling out a new generative AI feature that summarizes product reviews for customers.

The feature, which the company began testing earlier this year, is designed to help shoppers determine at a glance what other customers said about a product before they spend time reading through individual reviews. It will pick out common themes and summarize them in a short paragraph on the product detail page.

The company wrote in a blog post published this week that the AI-generated reviews are now available to a subset of mobile shoppers in the

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U.S. across a "broad" selection of products. And it may be expanded to more shoppers and additional categories of products in the "coming months" based on customer feedback, said Vaughn Schermerhorn, Amazon's director of community shopping.

The Seattle-based company has been looking for ways to integrate more artificial intelligence into its product offerings as the generative AI race heats up among tech companies. Amazon hasn't released its own high-profile AI chatbot or imaging tool. Instead, it's been focusing on services that will allow developers to build their own generative AI tools on its cloud infrastructure AWS.

Earlier this year, Amazon CEO Andy Jassy said in his letter to shareholders that generative AI will be a "big deal" for the company. He also said during an earnings call with investors last week that "every single one" of Amazon's businesses currently has multiple generative AI initiatives underway, including its devices unit, which works on products like the voice assistant Alexa.

In addition to the AI generated review, the company said it will also offer a product insights feature that allows customers to surface common themes in reviews.

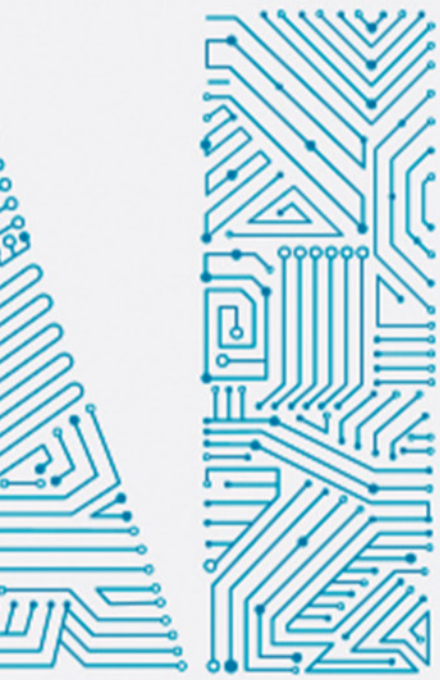

Image: Matt Rourke

FORD LURES APPLE EXECUTIVE TO OVERSEE ITS NEW SOFTWARE SUBSCRIPTION SERVICES UNIT

Ford has hired away a key Apple executive to run a new business unit that will sell software-related subscription services to vehicle owners.

The Dearborn, Michigan, automaker said it hired Peter Stern, who was Apple's vice president of services. He'll be president of Ford Integrated Services, a unit that will combine software and hardware into services.

At Apple, Stern oversaw Apple TV plus, iCloud storage, Apple Books, the arcade and fitness operations and other businesses, Ford said in a statement.

Stern started this week and reports directly to CEO Jim Farley.

Stern also will expand Ford's BlueCruise hands-free partially automated driving system, as well as productivity and safety and security services, the statement said.

Asked if people are getting tired of paying for subscription services, Stern said people will buy single services and bundles as long as they see the value.

"When we do that right, customers will sign up not only for individual, ala carte services, but I think we'll also create bundles of services that make it really easy for customers to get the most out of their vehicles," he said.

Stern, who before Apple was Time Warner Cable's chief product officer, said there were worries about whether the company would ever exceed $100 per month in average revenue per user. "That was in the rear view mirror pretty quickly because of the value we delivered," Stern said.

Also, Stern said that when he started at Apple, it had only two subscription services, iCloud and Apple Music, but when he left there were over 1 billion subscriptions for services.

"We know the playbook," he said. "We have some great ideas about the services that we need to offer."

He told reporters that he expects safety and security services will have a high number of subscribers. For instance, Ford recently showed off an SUV at a campsite that recognized a bear and activated the horn and lights to scare it away.

Image: Larry Busacca

Ford, which CEO Jim Farley said has 550,000 paid subscribers for software services with a 50% profit margin, does not immediately plan to separate the Integrated Services unit as a separate business and show its profits on the income statement. But that could be done later, he said.

The company, he said, will roll out a new vehicle electrical system in 2025 that will enable more software services. It will go into the next generation of electric vehicles as well as combustion-engine vehicles like the new version of the F-150 pickup, he said.

TESLA WINS THE EV CHARGE PLUG FORMAT WAR

TESLA

You're probably familiar with previous technology format wars, whether it be VHS versus Betamax or Blu-ray versus HD DVD. Now another has quickly brewed in the way people plug in and charge their electric vehicles. It's a battle of CCS versus NACS, and the winning format has a familiar backer: Tesla. Edmunds' experts break down what EV owners need to know about the format changes.

THE COMPETING FORMATS

The majority of electric vehicles, or EVs, currently have one of two types of plug styles to connect to public fast-charging stations. The first is called the Combined Charging System, or CCS. It's used on nearly all EVs except Tesla vehicles. The other is the North American Charging Standard, or NACS. All Tesla vehicles have this style plug.

These two formats currently coexist independently without much issue. If you own a Tesla, you'll typically stop at a Tesla Supercharger station that has NACS. For other EVs, you'll use third-party stations with the CCS-style plug.

But in May, Ford made a shocking announcement: It made a deal with Tesla to switch its future EVs to Tesla's NACS plug in lieu of the CCS plug. The switch to NACS means owners of these Ford EVs will be able to charge at Tesla stations. Soon after, many other automakers followed suit.

Image: Vlad Tchompalov

THE BRANDS THAT HAVE SWITCHED

At the time of writing, companies that have agreed to switch to NACS include Ford Motor Co., Mercedes-Benz, General Motors, Nissan, Rivian, Volvo and Polestar. A number of other automakers such as BMW, Volkswagen and Hyundai are in discussions with Tesla but have not yet confirmed a switch to NACS.

THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CCS AND NACS

While both CCS and NACS plugs perform the same basic function — safely deliver electricity into an EV's onboard battery pack and provide added driving range — there are some notable differences. In terms of appearance alone, the NACS plug is noticeably slimmer and less cumbersome. As an added benefit, it allows for a smaller charge point to be incorporated into an EV's design.

In terms of how they operate, CCS maintains a slight lead because it's capable of recharging at higher outputs. While Supercharger charge points currently have a maximum output of 250 kW, a small but growing number of CCS fast chargers can reach 350-kW levels of recharging.

NACS PROMISES A BETTER CHARGING EXPERIENCE

A primary motivating factor has been the current spotty and inconsistent third-party charging experience, with numerous brands, logins and apps. Meanwhile, Tesla's Supercharger stations are far and away the largest single network of DC fast chargers. Having this scale of recharging infrastructure, along with a single-use plug and billing account to streamline and simplify the charging process, is vital to making EVs an easier sell to skeptical car shoppers.

The scale of the Supercharger network didn't escape the attention of the federal government either. It has roughly $7.5 billion allocated toward EV adoption and boosting charging infrastructure. As part of this program, which includes federal subsidies for charging stations adaptable to a combination of CCS and NACS plugs, Tesla has agreed to open Supercharger stations to non-Tesla vehicles. Other major charging networks, such as Electrify America and ChargePoint, are planning to include both plug standards.

EVNEX
NETWORK
CHARGE
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EXPECT NACS ON MOST EVS BY 2025

The first non-Tesla vehicles to feature an integrated NACS plug will debut sometime in 2025, according to Ford, GM, Mercedes-Benz and other automakers embracing the new standard. Due to the complexities of revising a power port at scale, you will likely see the change occur in either all-new vehicles or those receiving a major refresh. While this all points to a major coup for Tesla and its NACS plug, owners of an EV with a CCS plug aren't being left behind.

EXISTING VEHICLES WITH A CCS PLUG

Current owners of an EV with a CCS plug might wonder if that format will become obsolete. Not anytime soon. There will still be plenty of charging stations with CCS. Additionally, an adapter will be available next year that will allow vehicles with CCS plugs to connect at a NACS charge station. It's also important to remember that these format changes mostly relate to drivers taking road trips or those who don't have a way to charge at home.

Where and how you recharge an EV look to get a whole lot simpler and more convenient over the next few years. More charging stations and less confusion about which plugs are compatible are smart ways to boost the adoption and sales of EVs.

COINBASE GETS APPROVAL TO OFFER CRYPTO FUTURES TO ELIGIBLE US CUSTOMERS

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Coinbase said it's received regulatory approval to bring federally regulated crypto futures trading to eligible customers in the U.S., sending shares sharply higher before the opening bell Wednesday.

In June, the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission filed lawsuits against Binance and Coinbase, saying that the companies were in violation of the the law because they were operating as securities exchanges without registering with the agency.

Coinbase said Wednesday that it had secured regulatory approval from the National Futures Association to operate as a futures commission merchant. The cryptocurrency exchange said that it filed its application with the association in 2021.

Now that it has received approval, Coinbase says eligible U.S. customers will be able to access regulated derivatives products through Coinbase Financial Markets, subject to the oversight of the Commodity Futures Trading Commission and the NFA.

The company tweeted that it can now offers cryptocurrency futures contracts in bitcoin and ether. Futures are derivative contracts to buy or sell an asset at a later date at a price previously agreed to under a contract.

"We believe this is a watershed moment to be able to bring regulated crypto products to U.S. customers," Coinbase said. "This is a critical milestone that reaffirms our commitment to operate a regulated and compliant business and be the most trusted and secure crypto-native platform for our customers."

The Coinbase website currently has a message that says U.S. regulated futures trading is coming soon. It invites people to sign up for its waitlist.

The company previously announced that it planned to launch bitcoin and ether futures trading for institutional investors on its Coinbase Derivatives Exchange in June.

Shares of Coinbase Global Inc. rose more than 5% before the market opened.

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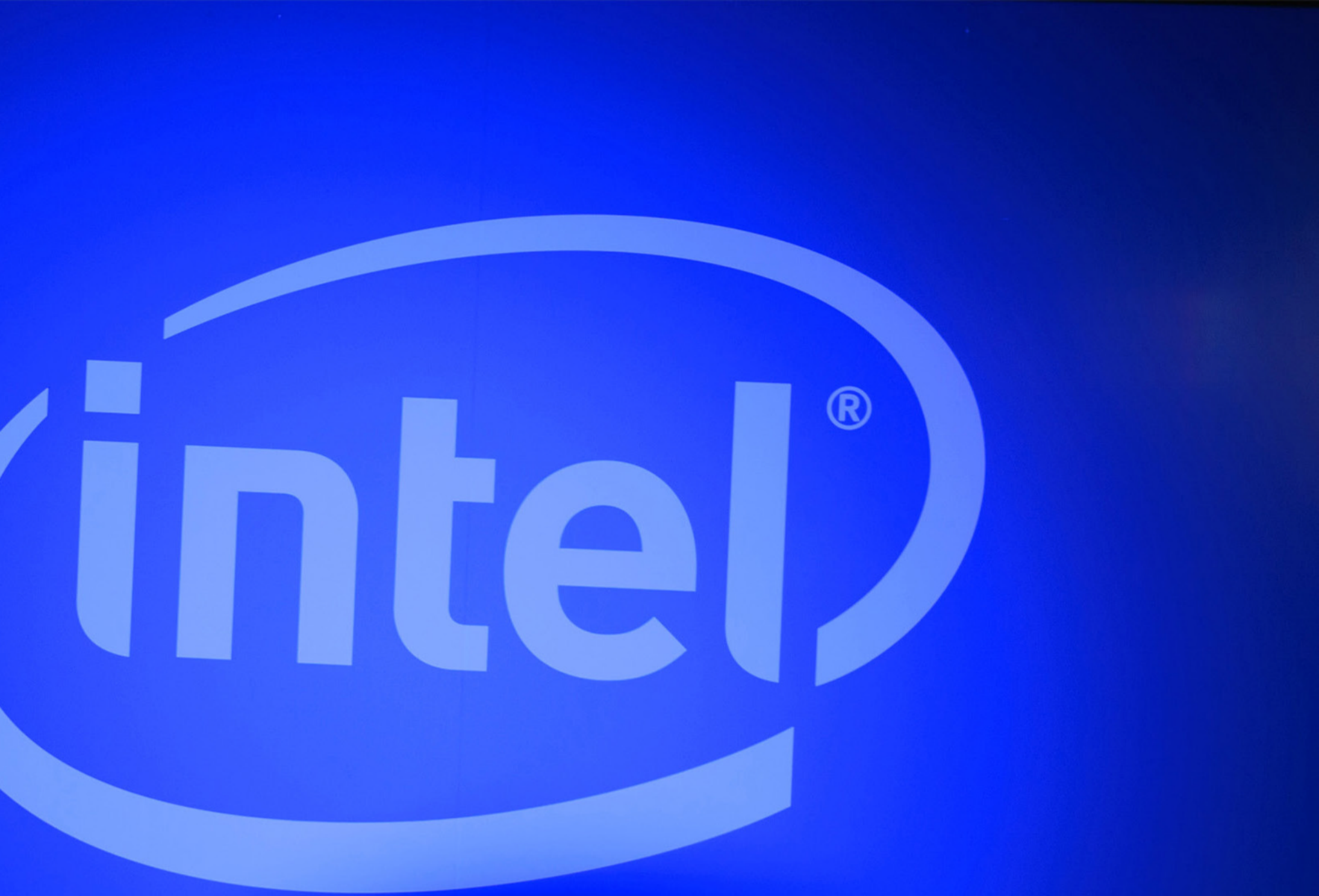
INTEL CALLS OFF $5.4B TOWER DEAL AFTER FAILING TO OBTAIN REGULATORY APPROVALS


intel

Intel will terminate a $5.4 billion deal to acquire Israeli chip manufacturer Tower Semiconductor after China failed to sign off on the deal amid rising tensions with the United States.

It was a mutual decision between Intel and Tower, the companies said Wednesday. Intel said that the deal was terminated "due to the inability to obtain in a timely manner the regulatory approvals required under the merger agreement."

Intel Corp. will pay Tower a termination fee of $353 million, the U.S. semiconductor giant said.

The deal required regulatory approval from several regulators worldwide including China, but Chinese regulators did not greenlight the deal by the Aug. 15 transaction deadline, even after Intel CEO Patrick Gelsinger traveled to China last month in a bid to win them over.

The scuttled deal between the two companies comes amid increasing U.S.-China tensions, particularly as the U.S. has tightened export controls and imposed restrictions aimed at crippling China's ability to purchase and manufacture advanced chips.

In response, China's antitrust regulator, the State Administration for Market Regulation, appears to have dragged its feet on approving mergers involving American companies, such as the Intel-Tower deal.

Intel originally aimed to close the deal by the first quarter of the year, but later extended the deadline after it failed to receive approval from China. Intel hoped that its acquisition of Tower would expand its manufacturing capacity and open up growth opportunities for the firm in U.S., Israel, Italy and Japan.

Tower's stock price fell more than 11% in pre-market trading in the U.S. The company's stock price in Tel Aviv also plunged over 10%.

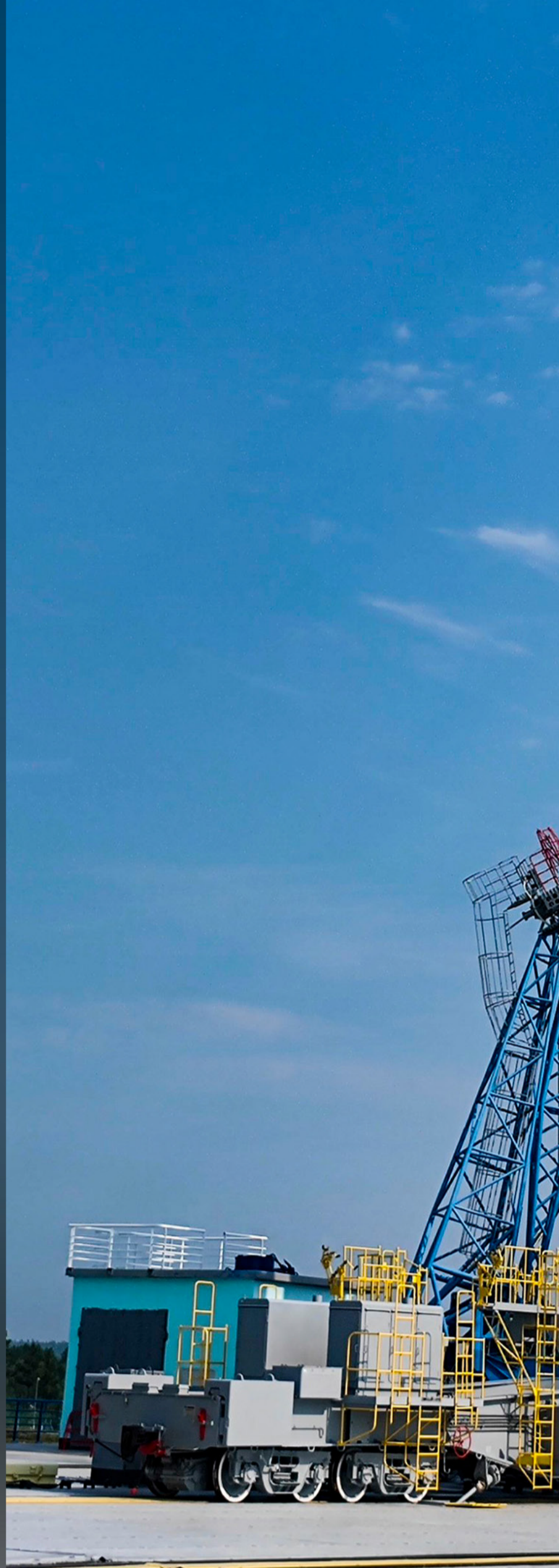
"Tower was very excited to join Intel to enable Pat Gelsinger's vision for Intel's foundry business," said Russell Ellwanger, Tower Semiconductor's CEO in a statement. "We appreciate the efforts by all parties."

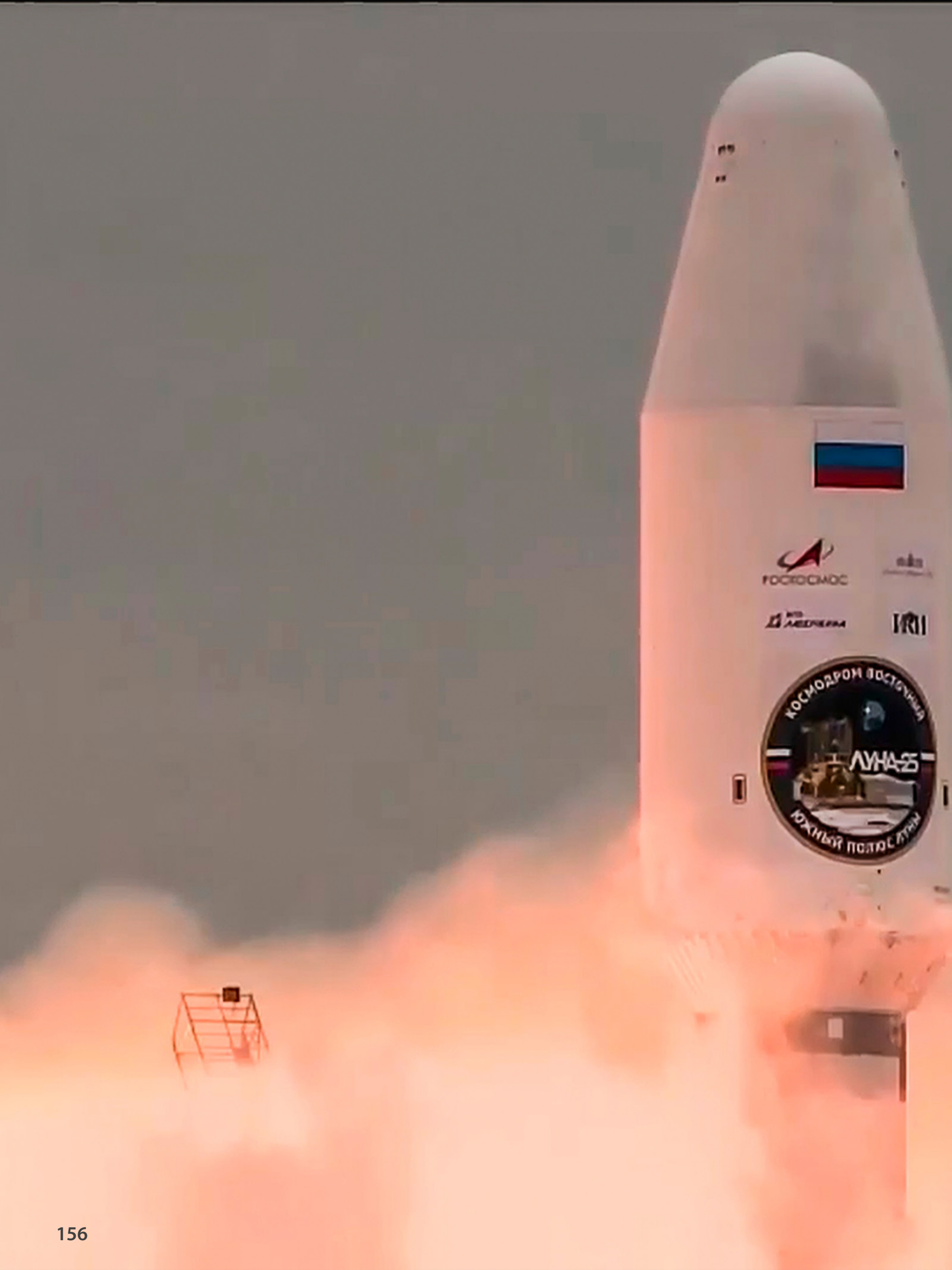
RUSSIA IS BACK ON THE LUNAR PATH. A ROCKET BLASTS OFF ON ITS FIRST MOON MISSION IN NEARLY 50 YEARS

A rocket carrying a lunar landing craft blasted off last week (11) on Russia's first moon mission in nearly 50 years, racing to land on Earth's satellite ahead of an Indian spacecraft.

The launch from Russia's Vostochny spaceport in the Far East of the Luna-25 craft to the moon is Russia's first since 1976 when it was part of the Soviet Union.

The Russian lunar lander is expected to reach the moon on Aug. 23, about the same day as an

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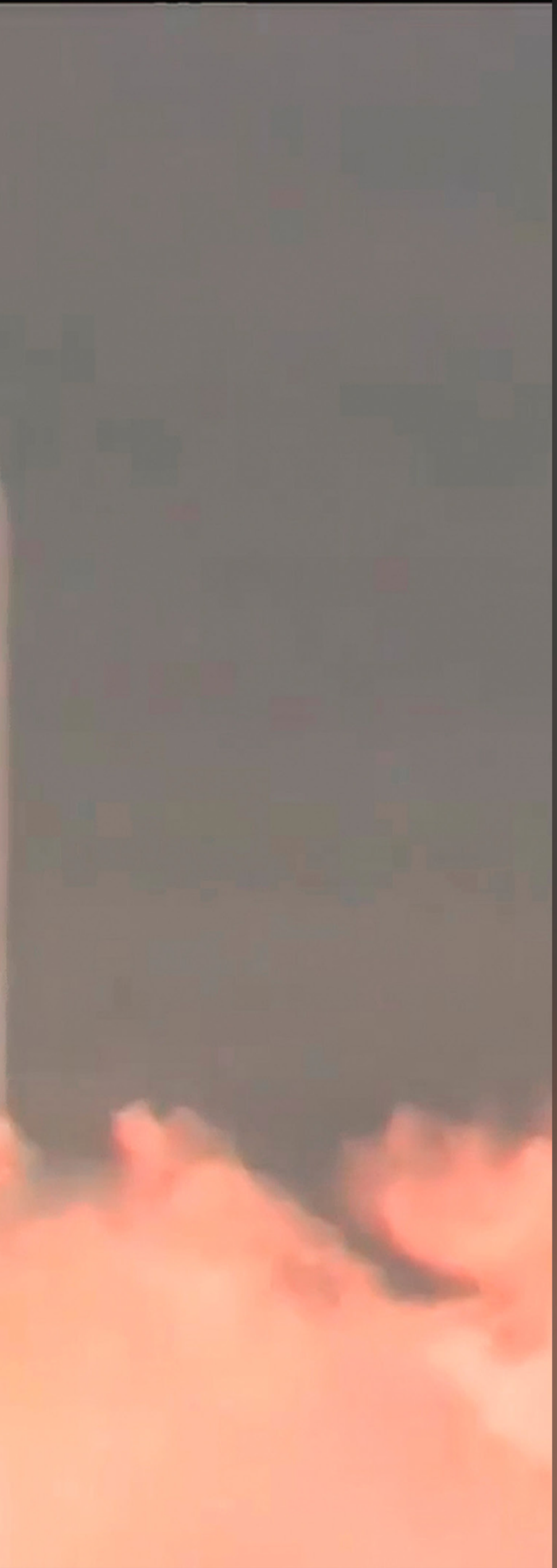


Indian craft which was launched on July 14. The Russian spacecraft will take about 5.5 days to travel to the moon's vicinity, then spend three to seven days orbiting at about 100 kilometers (62 miles) before heading for the surface.

Only three governments have managed successful moon landings: the Soviet Union, the United States and China. India and Russia are aiming to be the first to land at the moon's south pole.

Roscosmos, Russia's space agency, said it wants to show Russia "is a state capable of delivering a payload to the moon," and "ensure Russia's guaranteed access to the moon's surface."

"Study of the moon is not the goal," said Vitaly Egorov, a popular Russian space analyst. "The goal is political competition between two superpowers — China and the USA — and a number of other countries which also want to claim the title of space superpower."

Sanctions imposed on Russia after it invaded Ukraine make it harder for it to access Western technology, impacting its space program. The Luna-25 was initially meant to carry a small moon rover but that idea was abandoned to reduce the weight of the craft for improved reliability, analysts say.

"Foreign electronics are lighter, domestic electronics are heavier," Egorov said. "While scientists might have the task of studying lunar water, for Roscosmos the main task is simply to land on the moon — to recover lost Soviet expertise and learn how to perform this task in a new era."

The Luna-25 launched flawlessly from the Vostochny Cosmodrome in Russia's Far East, according to video feed from Roscosmos.

The spaceport is a pet project of Russian President Vladimir Putin and is key to his efforts to make Russia a space superpower and move Russian launches from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

A previous Indian attempt to land at the moon's south pole in 2019 ended when the lander crashed into the moon's surface.

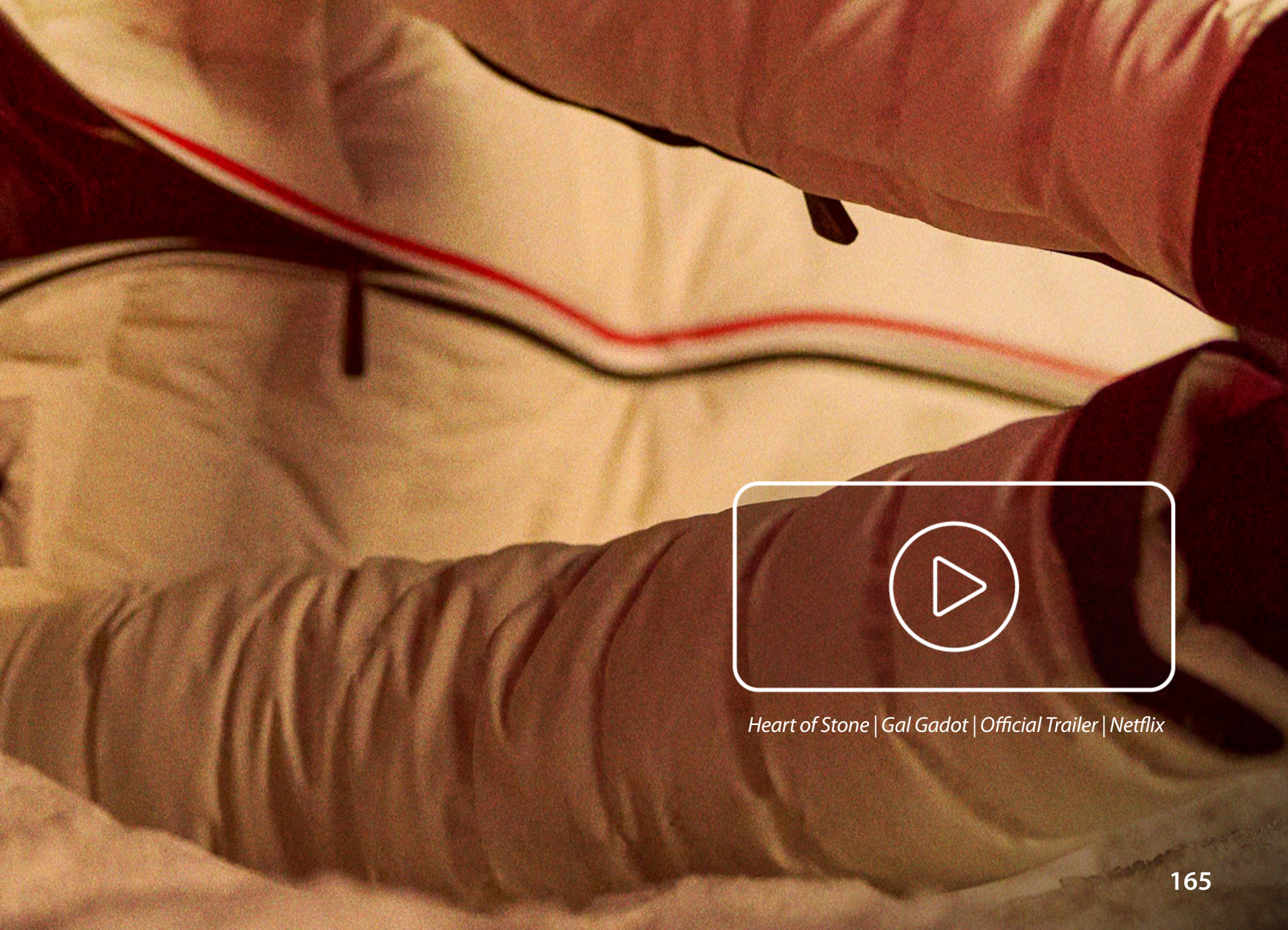
The lunar south pole is of particular interest to scientists, who believe the permanently shadowed polar craters may contain water. The frozen water in the rocks could be transformed by future explorers into air and rocket fuel.

"The moon is largely untouched and the whole history of the moon is written on its face," said Ed Bloomer, an astronomer at Britain's Royal Observatory, Greenwich. "It is pristine and like nothing you get on Earth. It is its own laboratory."

The Luna-25 is to take samples of moon rock and dust. The samples are crucial to understanding the moon's environment ahead of building any base there, "otherwise we could be building things and having to shut them down six months later because everything has effectively been sand-blasted," Bloomer said.

MOVIE REVIEW: GAL GADOT TURNS SUPERSPY IN ‘HEART OF STONE’

Heart of Stone | First Look | Netflix



Heart of Stone | Gal Gadot | Official Trailer | Netflix

It's turning out to be quite a summer for superspies and supercomputers.

A month after the action feast of "Mission: Impossible — Dead Reckoning Part I," in which Tom Cruise faced off with an AI supervillain called "the Entity," comes a very "MI"-like international espionage thriller with an equally fancy and powerful machine.

"Heart of Stone" stars Gal Gadot as Rachel Stone, an agent for an elite and clandestine intelligence agency called the Charter. Like "Mission: Impossible," "Heart of Stone" hits glamorous global destinations (the Italian Alps, Lisbon, Senegal, Iceland) and features lengthy actions sequence including a wingsuit skydive.

Whereas "Dead Reckoning" pushed old-school filmmaking to extremes for a gripping theatrical experience, "Heart of Stone" revels in its digital wizardry, feels vaguely algorithm-y in its conception and was made for Netflix. Both films, interestingly, are products of the same production company, Skydance.

"Mission: Impossible" was born out of the Cold War, but "Heart of Stone" conjures a peacekeeping spy unit outside of nationhood in the hopes of kickstarting a new franchise uncluttered by governments — a globetrotting spy movie without all those pesky geopolitics; a borderless intelligence agency for a borderless streaming era.

That may sound too harsh. After all, there have been countless lackluster espionage thrillers with little connection to the real world. ("Dead Reckoning," for all its thrills, has about as much to do with today's international politics as its

Heart of Stone | Gal Gadot | Final Look | Netflix

star has to do with lengthy interviews with journalists.) And "Heart of Stone," directed by Tom Harper ("Wild Rose," " The Aeronauts"), does have a few nifty moves of its own.

The film's opening sequence begins in a very Bond-like Alpine hotel where Gadot's Stone is part of an MI6 mission posing as an inexperienced tech, not a field agent. This allows for plenty of "She can do that?" looks when the operation falls apart and Stone begins flashing Cruise-level skills while rushing off with a glowing parachute down the darkened slopes in slinky, snowy chase.

To the credit of Harper, cinematographer George Steel and production designer Charles Wood, the action is generally fluid in "Heart of Stone." The film's handsomest design comes in Charter's secret weapon: the Heart, the so-named quantum computer with supreme hacking abilities that can process chance-of-success scenarios in real time. Its operator (Matthias Schweighöfer), like a new-age John King, contorts a room full of pixels with the wave of his hand, while guiding Charter agents from afar.

Also in the mix is Jamie Dornan's Parker, the leader of the MI6 unit that Stone is initially masquerading in — though his affiliations are also murky. The trouble is kicked off by a hacker of mysterious intentions played by Alia Bhatt, a Bollywood star making her Hollywood debut. Glenn Close pops in as the head of the CIA.

I'm not sure any of them get a chance to do all that much, though Bhatt is charmingly mischievous in her scenes. Not for the first

time, the actor I most wish was center stage is Sophie Okonedo, who, as a Charter leader, is the most soulful presence in a not particularly soulful film. Gadot makes for a slinky if unspectacular spy.

The plot, from screenwriters Greg Rucka and Allison Schroeder, revolves around the threat of the Heart falling into the wrong hands. This means that "Heart" is spoken of so much that you have expect the Wilson sisters to turn up eventually.

But there is nothing in the impressively generic "Heart of Stone," right down that title, that is even a little bit unexpected. All the pieces here are fine but nothing is distinct from dozens of films before it. You would swear that the movie's star AI wrote it — and even gave itself first billing, too.

"Heart of Stone," a Netflix release, is rated PG-13 by the Motion Picture Association for sequences of violence and action, and some language. Running time: 123 minutes. One and a half stars out of four.

GOING TO COLLEGE? HERE'S WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STUDENT LOANS

If you're heading to college or starting to think about where you'd like to apply, you're probably considering options for funding your education. If you need to borrow money to pursue your dreams, you are far from alone.

According to the Federal Reserve, 30% of all U.S. adults said they incurred at least some debt for their education. Borrowers owe a collective $1.77 trillion in student loan debt, including federal and private loans.

"Borrowing is almost at the point where it's a requirement," said Dana Kelly, from the

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

If you're a high school senior or a college student, you'll want to apply for federal student loans through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as FAFSA, in December for the 2024-2025 school year. For private student loans, you can apply whenever you need the loan.

When you take out student loans, it's beneficial have to have an idea of what professional field you want to pursue, calculate how much you need to borrow, and understand the basics of loan interest. If this sound like a lot, don't worry — we'll break it down for you. Here's what you need to know.

WHERE DO I START?

The first step is to fill out the FAFSA. You will have to answer questions about your family's financial contribution, along with other questions that will help determine if you qualify for federal or state financial aid and which loans you can apply for. You'll fill out the application each year.

Cathy Mueller, executive director of Mapping Your Future, a non-profit that helps people navigate higher education, recommends exhausting every possible funding option to reduce the amount you need to borrow.

If you're looking to apply for scholarships to fund your college education, you can check out the College Board's scholarship search directory.

As you fill out the FAFSA, Mueller recommends that you estimate the amount you will need to borrow for your entire college career, but also be

realistic about what you will be able to pay back.

A tool that can help is the Debt/Salary wizard from Mapping Your Future, an interactive calculator that helps determine how much you can borrow based on your estimated future earnings.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT DATES TO KNOW?

In previous years, the FAFSA opened on Oct. 1. This year, the government is making big changes and the application will be available in December, but the date has not yet been announced. The FAFSA application usually closes the following June.

Once the application is open, you need to check your state's deadline to apply for state financial aid. Since financial aid is first-come, first-served, you'll want to apply as soon as you can to qualify for both federal and state grants.

For private student loans, the timeline looks different. Private lenders require you to have proof of enrollment, so experts recommend you apply a couple of months before your tuition is due.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN FEDERAL STUDENT LOANS AND PRIVATE LOANS?

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Federal student loans are backed by the government and private loans come from banks, credit unions or other private institutions.

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In general, federal student loans offer lower interest rates and more opportunities for affordable repayment plans, such as the Public Service Forgiveness Plan or the various income-driven repayment plans.

Kelly recommends that students try to only use federal student loans, though there are borrowing limits.

“More than likely, private loans are going to cost a student more over the life of the loan,” Kelly said.

Private loans come with a different set of requisites and application process.

WHAT IF I RECEIVE MORE MONEY THAN I NEED?

It’s recommended that you calculate the amount that you will need to cover your education before you accept a student loan. You might get offered a bigger loan than you need. If this happens to you, Mueller recommends that you return the money you don’t need, since it’s a loan at the end of the day and you will have to pay back that amount with interest.

If you find out that you’ll want to return student loan money, contact your school’s financial aid office to begin the process.

WHAT ARE SUBSIDIZED AND UNSUBSIDIZED STUDENT LOANS?

There are several different federal student loan options: direct subsidized loans, direct unsubsidized loans, direct PLUS loans and direct consolidation loans. But the most common are direct subsidized and unsubsidized loans, which

are taken by the person who is completing the college degree.

Subsidized loans have their interest covered by the government and are granted to students with demonstrated financial need. Subsidized loans have their interest covered while you're in school at least half-time, for six months after you graduate and if you qualify for deferment, which allows you to stop making payments temporarily. Unsubsidized loans are available to most students, but they are responsible for paying the interest.

WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT STUDENT LOAN INTEREST RATES?

Student loans must be paid back with interest, which is additional money that you pay for borrowing. The interest on your student loan depends on your type of loan and when your loan was made available for you to use for the first time.

If your loan is disbursed on or after July 1, 2023, but before July 1, 2024, you will have a fixed interest rate of 5.5%.

WHAT SHOULD I DO BEFORE I SIGN MY STUDENT LOAN AGREEMENT?

Before you accept your student loan offer, regardless if it's federal or private, you want to make sure you understand the details, said Betsy Mayotte, president of The Institute of Student Loan Advisors. Those include when interest accrues, if interest is capitalized and if there are any late fees.

If reading the details on your own feels daunting, Mayotte recommends speaking with a

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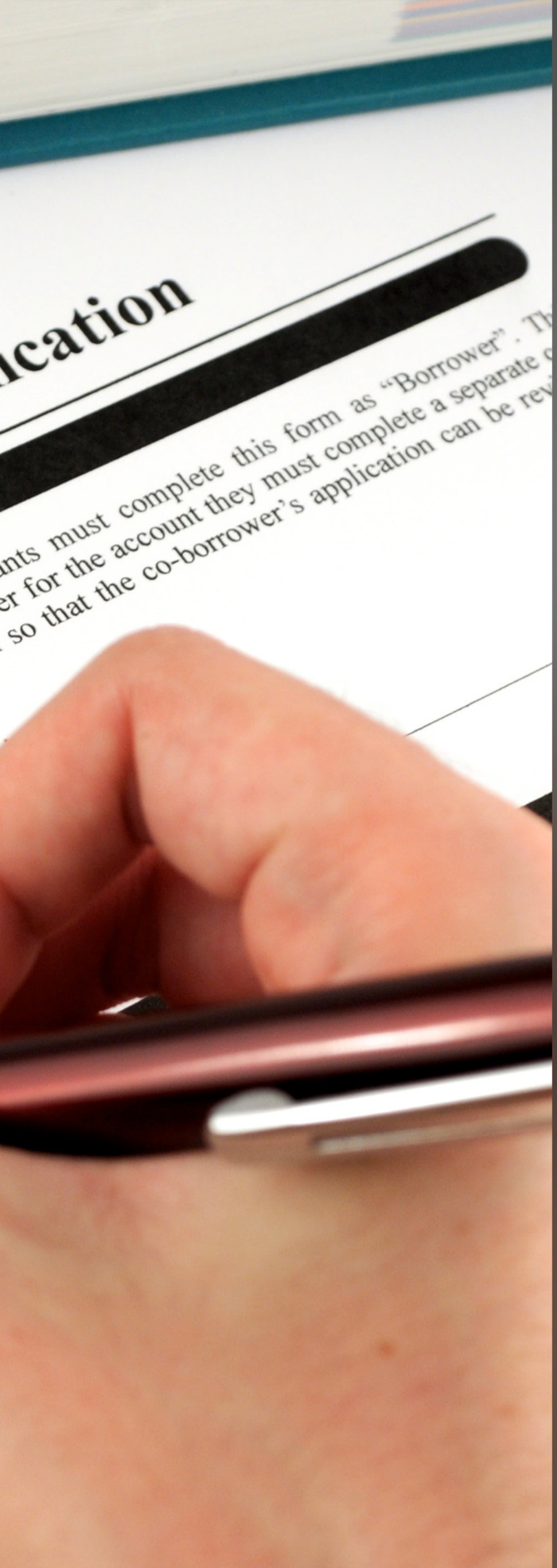

financial aid counselor, either at your university or elsewhere.

If you meet with a counselor, it's good practice to come with prepared questions about repayment programs for when you need to start paying back your loan.

Good questions to ask yourself or a counselor, according to Kelly, include:

1. If I get this amount of a loan as a freshman, is that rate going to be flat over my four years? Or do you anticipate that I'm going to need to borrow more each year?

2. Does my opportunity for scholarships go up so the amount I need to borrow can come down?

If you are taking out federal student loans, it's a requirement that you complete an entrance counseling course. Kelly recommends that you pay extra attention to this process and not rush through it.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT MY STUDENT LOAN?

If you have specific questions about your student loans, there are many resources available. You can visit the Federal Student Aid website or reach out to your college's financial aid office or community or non-profit organizations such as Mapping Your Future.

WHAT ARE SOME RECOMMENDATIONS TO MANAGE MY STUDENT LOANS?

Mueller recommends that you keep track of how much you are borrowing each year so you have an idea of how much you will owe by the end of

your college career and how much your monthly payments will be.

Mueller also recommends that, if you are working during college, you consider paying some of the interest that accumulates each year.

"You're not required to make those interest-only payments. But if you do, you're saving yourself money in the long run," Mueller said.

Interest payments while you are still in college are generally low, but they get capitalized once you've graduated or left school, which means your loan gets larger and you would be paying interest on the interest, said Mueller.

Back
zuck
10 million sign up
sees replies

FOR MARK ZUCKERBERG'S THREADS, THE REAL RIVAL IS STILL TIKTOK — NOT THE FORMER TWITTER
s in seven hours
. 23,864 likes

Threads, the simple, bare-bones text-based social network created by Facebook owner Meta, burst onto the scene during a particularly bad week for the rival then still known as Twitter. It quickly amassed 100 million signups — a huge feat for a newcomer in the space — and was dubbed as a "Twitter killer."

By week two, though, signups began to drop off. As of Aug. 7, the number of people who used Threads daily hovered around 10 million on Android phones, down from 49 million when it launched a month earlier, according to research firm SimilarWeb. Is Mark Zuckerberg's latest venture just a flash in the pan? That depends on whether it can hold its own against its biggest rival. And no, that's not X, the former Twitter. It's TikTok. And the odds are not great.

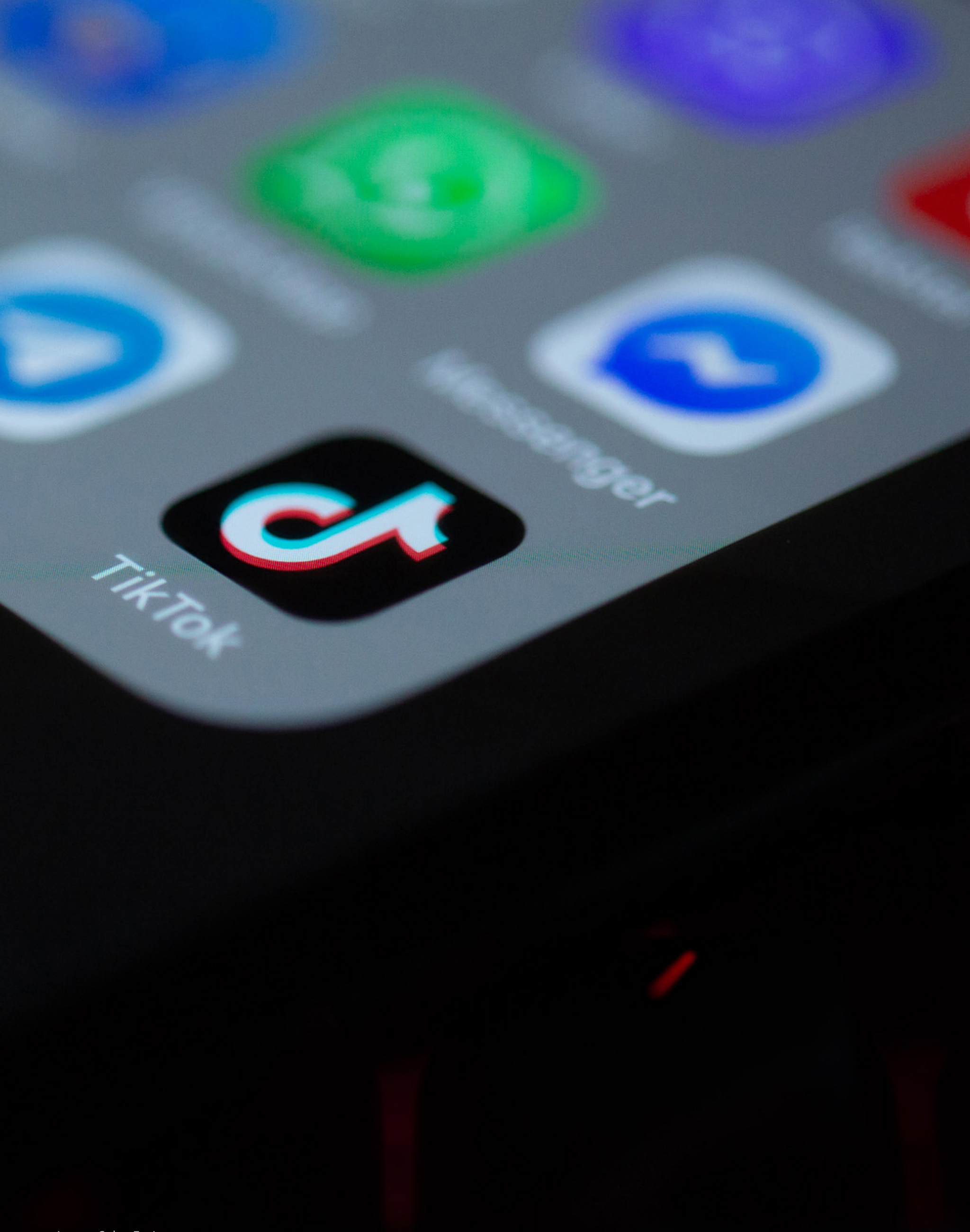

Image: Solen Feyissa

Image: Julio Lopez

"Mark Zuckerberg may have temporarily been distracted in his sparring with Elon Musk, but the real battle for Meta is with TikTok," said Insider Intelligence analyst Jasmine Enberg. "And Zuckerberg still really needs to watch his back."

It's true that before TikTok took over the role of digital town square and "originator of trends," Enberg noted, the role was held by Twitter. But many of the biggest trends now come from people who came of age in the TikTok era — Gen Z and even younger kids and teens. And just as with stodgy Facebook, Twitter usage is also declining among teens, according to data from the Pew Research Center. As such, text-based social media platform may not be all that appealing to the TikTok generation, where dances, makeup tips, outlandish recipes — not to mention the whole idea of de-influencers — spread via videos rather than the written word.

Regardless of format, though, Threads' biggest challenge is "being able to find a unique identity outside of being a Twitter alternative and outside of the expansion of Instagram," Enberg said.

For now, its not clear it has one. The app amassed a massive initial user base, including well known celebrities and brands, precisely because it is an expansion of Instagram. To sign up for Threads, you need an Instagram account, and it's easy to toggle back and forth between the two. Instagram has well over a billion users (by some estimates closer to 2 billion), and the app has been luring users to Threads with notifications to join their friends there.

Image: Julio Lopez

The question is, what to do once you're on? So far, Threads' user base is similar to that of Instagram, and prominent accounts are predictable — celebrities, politicians, news organizations, influencers and the like. It's harder to find original posts from regular people, unless your the Instagram connections you ported over happen to be a chatty — or thready — bunch. If you sign up without connecting a well-used Instagram account, by creating one just so you can join Threads, the experience can feel impersonal and sterile as the app steers you to follow big, popular accounts that everyone else follows, too.

While many popular internet celebrities rushed to sign up for Threads and quickly amassed large followings, it's not clear how many of them are returning regularly. MrBeast, a popular YouTuber whose actual name is Jimmy Donaldson, has 5 million followers on the app. But he has not posted in two weeks — though he has sent several TikToks, tweets (or posts on the site now called X) and a 18-minute video on YouTube, where he has 175 million subscribers.

Zuckerberg, in a recent conference call, said he's "optimistic" about Threads but acknowledged there's a "lot of work to do" to make it reach its full potential.

"It has been sort of this weird anomalous thing in the tech industry that there hasn't been an app for public discussions like this that has reached 1 billion people," he said. "When I look at all the different social experiences, it just seems like there should be one like this."

command
option
THREADS

Image: Julio Lopez

Maybe so, but it's not clear it'll be Threads. As Zuckerberg acknowledged during the same call, Meta has tried "a bunch of standalone experiences over time" but in general, it hasn't had much luck. There's Facebook, sure. But the company bought both Instagram and WhatsApp, its two other successful apps. The biggest one may be Messenger — but even that started as a service inside Facebook before it was spin out as a separate app.

"(It's) awesome that we get a chance to work on this, and I'm really optimistic about where we are," Zuckerberg said. "But it's going to be a long road ahead."

keep reinver

HP FAILS TO DERAIL CLAIMS THAT IT BRICKS SCANNERS ON MULTIFUNCTION PRINTERS WHEN INK RUNS LOW

HP has failed to shunt aside class-action legal claims that it disables the scanners on its multifunction printers when their ink runs low. Though not for lack of trying.

On Aug. 10, a federal judge ruled that HP Inc. must face a class-action lawsuit claiming that the company designs its "all-in-one" inkjet printers to disable scanning and faxing functions whenever a single printer ink cartridge runs low. The company had sought — for the second time — to dismiss the lawsuit on technical legal grounds.

"It is well-documented that ink is not required in order to scan or to fax a document, and it is certainly possible to manufacture an all-in-one printer that scans or faxes when the device is out of ink," the plaintiffs wrote in their complaint. "Indeed, HP designs its all-in-one printer products so they will not work without ink. Yet HP does not disclose this fact to consumers."

The lawsuit charges that HP deliberately withholds this information from consumers to boost profits from the sale of expensive ink cartridges.

Color printers require four ink cartridges -- one black and a set of three cartridges in cyan, magenta and yellow for producing colors. Some will also refuse to print if one of the color cartridges is low, even in black-and-white mode.

HP declined to comment on the issue, citing the pending litigation. The company's court filings in the case have generally not addressed the substance of the plaintiff's allegations.

In early 2022, U.S. District Judge Beth Labson Freeman dismissed the complaint on legal grounds but did not address the lawsuit's claims. The judge allowed the plaintiffs to amend their

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D5460,
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claim and resubmit it. On Aug. 10, the judge largely rejected HP's request to dismiss the revised complaint, allowing the case to proceed.

All-in-one inkjet printers generally seem like a bargain compared to the cost of separate devices with scanning, copying and fax functions. For instance, HP currently sells its all-in-one OfficeJet Pro 8034e online for just $159. But its least expensive standalone scanner, the ScanJet Pro s2, lists for $369 — more than twice the cost of the multifunction printer.

Of course, only one of these devices requires printer ink. "Printer ink is wildly expensive," Consumer Reports states in its current printer buying guide, noting that consumer ink costs can easily run more than $70 a year.

Worse, a significant amount of ink is never actually used to print documents because it's consumed by printer maintenance cycles. In 2018, Consumer Reports tested hundreds of all-in-one inkjet printers and found that, when used intermittently, many models delivered less than half of their ink to printed documents. A few managed no more than 20% to 30%.

HP isn't alone in facing such legal complaints. A different set of plaintiffs sued the U.S. unit of printer and camera maker Canon Inc. in 2021 for similarly handicapping its all-in-one printers without disclosure. The parties settled that case in late 2022. Terms were not disclosed.

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